

Hele's School

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



Friday, 15 December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Apologies that this is a longer letter than normal but as we draw the Autumn term to a close, there is much to share. I would like to begin by thanking you for all your support throughout this very busy term. Whether actively engaging with school events or supporting us to do our very best for your child through reinforcing day-to-day expectations and assuring strong attendance, your support is greatly appreciated.

Christmas Music Concert: Tuesday evening was very well-attended, and we were treated to a super programme of song and music with a good mix of joy and laughter thrown in for good measure to get us all in the festive spirit. Well done to all our wonderful performers, and the staff team supporting the event whether in the spotlight or backstage. A great Team Hele's effort!

Leavers' Awards Ceremony: Last night, we welcomed back some familiar faces from the Year 13 Class of 2023. It was wonderful to hear the tales of university life, gap year shenanigans and for some, the reality of life in the working world!

Mock Exam results: Our Year 11 event this morning was set up to mimic the final results being issued in August. It would be fair to say there was a mix of emotion evident, with much to celebrate for some and a reality check for others who can see in black and white the clear link between hard work and revision and outcomes. Hele's Alumnus, Kelly Armstrong, delivered an inspirational assembly to Year 11 immediately afterwards, reflecting honestly on his journey from 'a much-needed wakeup call' (Kelly's words) in December, to showing strong improvement by the final exam series and achieving some exceptional GCSE results in the summer. Kelly is now in his third year at Med School, St Bart's in London, where he continues to excel.

Charity fundraising: As well as educating children about sustainability and taking care of the planet for future generations, teamwork and entrepreneurial flair was put to the test at the Sustainable Gifts Fayre recently, and now we have had a chance to count the money taken on the night, I can confirm that £1,458.45 was raised in just 2 hours of trading! After the £1 per student start-up loan was paid back to the Finance Team, the grand total to share with Year 7 charities is a whopping £1218.45! Mrs Allen and 7C raised the most at £244.93 from selling their wares, but all Tutor groups were exceptional in the way they embraced this project. Thank you for your support and congratulations to all students and staff for their superb effort.

Sparx Maths Homework: We are delighted by the impact of the Sparx Maths programme since its introduction in Hele's in 2018. Students and parents regularly tell us how helpful they find the homework and the programme's ability to diagnose what individual students need to repeatedly practise to get better. We regularly see our students' completion rates at the top of all secondary schools across Westcountry School Trust.

In recent months, in line with the best schools nationally, we have gradually increased the homework set via Sparx from 30 minutes to 1 hour a week at Key Stage 4. We have seen the benefits with students' mathematical gaps being filled and confidence increasing. So, this will continue at Key Stage 4 and be introduced at Key Stage 3 from January. We are confident that this will have significant impact on students' progress and attainment in Maths.

As ever, please don't hesitate to contact your child's Maths teacher if there are specific concerns with the Sparx homework. A reminder that Sparx Club is held every Thursday, during Break 1, Break 2 and after school. This is an opportunity for students to get help on any questions they are stuck on, or just have a calm workspace where they can complete their Sparx tasks. The club is held in CR3 during break times, and CR7 after school.

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B in 2 win: The attendance challenge comes to a crescendo next week, with the grand prize draws being held on both Monday *and* Tuesday. Remember, students must be in school on the day of the draw to be able to claim their prize. There are some fantastic prizes on offer, with almost 100 items ranging from £50 vouchers to Cadbury's selection boxes and everything in between. In fact, just this morning, a number of delicious Yule Logs arrived from Friary Mill to add to the prize haul! Celebratory breakfasts are also planned for Monday and Tuesday, with the winning tutor groups being awarded a golden ticket on the morning of their treat. There is much excitement about next week!

Hear from Hele's: Edition 6 of the Student Newspaper is now available on the School website and can be accessed via this link - [Hear from Hele's edition 6 on the website](#). As always, it is well worth a read. I particularly enjoyed the festive theme throughout, and especially the cupcakes recipe! Well done to our team of Year 9 contributors.

Latin: Year 8, 9 and 10 Latin scholars held a Triclinium Latin dinner party this week. Students wore togas and laurel crowns and were treated to a host of Roman recipes. Given that places were determined in Roman times by social hierarchy, some of the courses were served to those lying down on couches – thank goodness civilization has moved on, as it was a rather messy affair!

We have been so impressed with the large number of students who continue to attend lessons after school for an additional 2 hours per week to pursue their passion for Latin. As a token of their commitment and hard work, Mrs Brookshaw threw a pizza party for students to celebrate the end of a busy term.

Staffing news: After a period of Maternity Leave, we welcome back Head of MFL, Mrs Blandin-Neaves for Term 3. Mrs Earnshaw, who has done a super job of leading the MFL Department in Mrs Blandin-Neaves' absence, returns to her substantive role of Teacher of MFL.

The end of term brings a change in the Technology Department too, as we say a fond farewell to Fiona Donald, Teacher of Food Technology. We wish Mrs Donald well for whatever lies ahead and thank her for all she has done for our young people and families. I will write to introduce the new Food Technology Teacher in the New Year.

Congratulations to Lauren Gordon, currently Learning Support Assistant at Hele's, on her appointment to the role of Learning Supervisor, covering this position for the remainder of this academic year. We are delighted that Hele's students will continue to benefit from Ms Gordon's care and support, albeit in a different role.

Return to school: Whilst we do not want to look ahead to January before we even begin celebrating the festive season, it is important to raise the topic of uniform and provide a timely reminder of expectations for all students. Could I please extend a plea that prior to our return to School, parents and carers work with their children to ensure they have all of the correct uniform items required, and that they are wearing them correctly on a daily basis. This includes black, polishable shoes (no canvas or trainers) and a school skirt or black tailored trousers. Leggings are not permitted. Full uniform guidance can be found on our website. Daily uniform checks will continue in the New Year, and we are keen that no students are receiving sanctions for issues which can be easily rectified. Please consult your child's Tutor or Head of Year with any queries and ensure communication if an emergency situation arises.

Good news: 46 Year 7 students from the Hele's Centre of Excellence enjoyed a celebration of cake and juice this week for their hard work on their individual projects. Following the theme 'what makes you who you are', there was an amazing array of topics from taste buds to birthmarks! Well done to our Year 7s, a job well done.

Congratulations to our CCF cadets who were formally recognised in last night's CCF Awards Evening. Louise Beatson and Matthew Duckworth were both promoted to Cadet Sergeant (Army Section), and the Section Awards are as below:

RN Section	Army Section	RAF Section
Best Junior Cadet: Phoebe Cathro Best Senior Cadet: Flynn Richards	Best Junior Cadet: Kacper Siwinski Best Senior Cadet: Louise Beatson	Best Junior Cadet: Tianna Foley Best Senior Cadet: Harrison Randall-King
Paul Glasspoole Best New Recruit Award: Alex Keyes (RN), Josh Hewitson (Army), Adriana Svitakova (RAF)		
Paul Newcombe Most Enthusiastic Cadet Award: Alfie Hackett (Army). Runners up: Georgia Cameron (RN), Xander Page (RAF)		

Indoor Tennis coaching: We have a long-standing relationship with Plympton Tennis Club and have seen many Hele's students benefit from this partnership over the years in all manner of ways. The club are offering Tennis coaching for all abilities from age 5 to 12 years old each Friday from 5 – 6pm, starting on 5 January 2024. The cost of each session

is £7, with the first session being free as a special New Year offer. To book a place please contact mail@tennis-plympton.co.uk

Carol Services: St Mary's Church, Plympton are holding Carol Services on Monday, 18 December – a 2pm community service which will be more relaxed, and a more parish service and 7.30pm. Refreshments will be provided after the services. A collection will be taken to support the work of the Shekinah, Embrace the Middle East, and St Mary's Church. A warm welcome awaits, and an invite is extended to all!

Cost of living support: If you're struggling due to the rising cost of living, there's support available for you and your family. Plymouth's online Cost of Living Hub can signpost you to all the help that's on offer across the city. This includes everything from financial support such as how to check you're claiming the benefits you're entitled to and help with budgeting, to where to access free or low-cost food, free things to do with your family, mental health support and much more. Remember - if you are finding things difficult, you are not alone and there is no shame in asking for help. Everyone needs a little bit of extra support at some point in their lives. Visit the online hub at www.plymouth.gov.uk/costofliving

Looking ahead:

W/b Monday, 18 December: Celebration breakfasts for Tutor groups with highest attendance this term
B in 2 win grand prize draws (Monday and Tuesday)

Tuesday, 19 December: Christmas Jumper Day in aid of Save the Children, £1 donation
Term 2 ends for all students and staff, 3.10pm

On behalf of all at Hele's School, here's to a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. I hope you manage to rest, relax, and enjoy the company of those close to you over the festive period. We look forward to welcoming all students back on Wednesday, 3 January.

Kindest regards,

Justin Mason

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Principal