

Hele's School

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



Friday 20 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

This week has certainly been a tough and challenging one, and saying an abrupt and unexpected farewell to our Year 11 and Year 13 students yesterday and then closing the gates to the majority of our school community for the foreseeable future at 3pm today has certainly been emotional for us all. The manner in which our staff, students and parent body have worked in partnership this week to remain calm and pragmatic in such a time of adversity and uncertainty is commendable and one of the many reasons why I love my job – Team Hele's at our best! Thank you to everyone for your ongoing efforts, understanding and positivity - we couldn't have got to the end of the week without your support.

Some key messages and reminders in preparation for next week:

Key Worker 'Edu-Care': Hele's School is committed to working in any way possible and for as long as is feasible and safe to ensure there is care provision for children of Key Workers and children classed as 'vulnerable'. This provision begins on Monday 23rd March at 8.30am to 3pm each day. Thank you to parents who have already responded to the survey issued earlier today to help us plan staffing and provision for next week in the first instance. A reminder that the deadline for completion is 7am on Monday morning.

Students accessing Edu-Care will be expected to attend school wearing full uniform at 8.30am and with usual school equipment. Access is via the Seymour Road entrance only and through Reception to the Library to register. All gates (Plymbridge Road, Trelawney Road and the side gates attached to the main School building) will be locked throughout the day. Students will be supervised by a member of staff to complete work posted by teachers on ClassCharts. Food is available to buy at breaktime and lunchtime, but there is no breakfast club provision. Please note, only children booked into the Edu-Care provision will be allowed on site.

Messages to students: We have found an important and very necessary opportunity to assemble today – albeit with chairs spaced out far more than usual to respect personal space - to reinforce plans and expectations for learning and wellbeing from next week onwards and to reassure students on a number of levels that they will not be alone through these uncertain times. Students have each been issued with a written support for learning guide and there is also an electronic copy that has been posted on their ClassCharts for your information. This explains exactly what work will be set and when, how to make the most of time and how to keep in touch with staff.

Parent guide for remote learning arrangements: A parent guide is attached to this communication as a PDF and is posted on the School website as a reference guide, including FAQs and tips for supporting your child's learning and progress over the coming weeks. We will monitor and evolve our provision in response to government advice about how long schools are likely to remain closed – the provision in place is a short-term

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measure for 3 weeks or so and is based on consolidation of work already undertaken this year and, as timescales become clearer, we will change this provision to deliver new content where and when appropriate. Please also note that the School website holds a wealth of information, both of a learning nature and to support children's safety and wellbeing, as well as safeguarding contact details for Hele's staff and Plymouth safeguarding and child protection personnel.

Communication: A list of email addresses of all staff is on the School website should parents need to make contact. We welcome communication, but please recognise the fact that our usual protocol of acknowledging and responding to emails within 48 hours has been relaxed because of the demands of the situation we are in currently. I know that staff will respond to emails as soon as they can during the working day in term time. Please do respect that we will all be trying to juggle the demands of caring for our families and loved ones with staying healthy and being able to work, as well as managing the same anxieties and worries we will all feel over the coming weeks. Each of us will undoubtedly be determined to do our best in providing some sense of normality for your children and our own children, so patience and understanding is appreciated should there be any glitches along the way.

Information will continue to be shared with parents and carers via InTouch emailing, the School website and social media, so do please check these areas regularly and look out for updates.

Free School Meals: For those in receipt of Free School Meals, please be advised that a separate letter has been sent to you this afternoon which outlines how food will be provided, whether a child is accessing Edu-Care or is being educated at home. Should you have any questions about your Free School Meal entitlement, please contact hamblinc@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

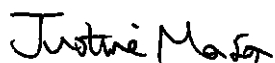
Keeping ourselves and each other safe and well: The key part of the Government's strategy to close schools today to most children for the foreseeable future is to limit opportunities for the spread of infection through cross-contamination and large group gathering. As we enter a new phase for COVID-19, the other important element to this strategy is to take seriously and implement robustly the national guidance around social distancing. I am sure, like me, you and your family will do all it takes to ensure we all do our bit for minimising spread of infection by keeping children indoors wherever possible, as hard as this will be for us all at times! At School, we will be rapidly moving to a situation where we will operate on a skeleton staff to keep our Edu-Care provision going for as long as possible, and encouraging home working so as to reduce the number of people in the building at any time. We will also be locking down large areas of the building for a deep clean and ensuring areas used during the day are thoroughly cleaned before the next day, to keep a safe working environment for those staff and students accessing the site.

And finally: I end for the moment where I started, which is to thank you all for your support and encouragement in these dreadful times. All at Hele's have been genuinely touched by the messages of thanks we have received this week, your offers of help and your well wishes for the times ahead – a timely reminder to us all about the power of kind words to lift the spirits and brighten dark days.

Let's keep our lines of communication open both ways, as we may not see each other for some time. Whether we are together in the same building or remote, we remain part of Team Hele's and all the fabulous things that this encapsulates. I know we will emerge from this crisis stronger as individuals and as a community.

Stay healthy and look after each other.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal