

Hele's School

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



Friday 19 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Wider re-opening: to say it has been an absolute joy in seeing just short of 80% of our whole Year 10 attend School this week, along with Year 93% of invited Year 12s, is by no means an understatement! I know I speak for my colleagues when I say that a school with no children is just a shell, but bringing our young people back for some face-to-face provision has brought an energy, a passion for learning and an optimism that we've all been missing since late March.

If you are a parent/carer of a Year 10 or Year 12 student returning this week, please pass on my thanks to your child(ren). Students have been attentive, respectful and proactive of social distancing measures and new routines and have been amazing in overcoming any initial anxieties about a return to the unknown. Every member of staff teaching or supporting them in classrooms, without question, has been immensely complimentary about their conduct – we are so very proud of them!

For those attending School, both in Y10 and 12 but also our EduCare provision, it would be really helpful if students could bring with them headphones that connect to a standard PC – ear buds/AirPods and newer iPhone headphones may not be able to connect, so please check the suitability of headphones in advance. We do have some spare sets available, but these are limited and cannot be shared across users without disinfecting first so as to reduce the risk of infection spread. We are therefore requesting that students bring a set with them to School, if they have them.

Returning students have been very honest in sharing their experiences of lockdown, and it is clear that many young people are struggling to maintain motivation and engagement in learning, impacted by a change of routine – namely, sleep patterns going awry because of late night Netflix binge-watching or gaming, and a lack of exercise. This, I've no doubt, is something experienced by many young people and adults, not just those in Years 10 and 12. Your support in establishing or reinforcing good and regular routines is appreciated now, more than ever.

Whilst we continue to work hard to ensure our remote provision engages and enthuses our children at home throughout this interim period, and we will continue to do so, I'm sure we all agree that the ideal situation is for teachers/support staff and young people to meet in real-time and in real life to move learning on; that has been perfectly evident from the many parents/carers I have spoken to at the school gates this week, as well as talking to the majority of our returners.

We, like you and so many of our children, I'm sure, are looking forward to a time when we are able to safely invite more children back to school. We don't know when that will be yet, but there is a national ambition being articulated that suggests September is likely to see all year groups back in some form or other. I'm sorry I can't be more specific than that at this stage, but please be assured that school leaders nationally will continue to respond positively and proactively to government guidance as and when it is published.

On the note of guidance, schools were expecting to receive a steer from the government this week pertaining to the "big catch up plans" that were mentioned in passing by the Prime Minister last week and this. Other than a news item on BBC News this morning alluding to a £1billion catch up fund for schools in England that is being earmarked for one-

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to-one and small group tuition, I regret to say that schools have yet to receive further details from the government as to which children would be eligible, which subjects would be covered, how and when tuition would be delivered, and how the number of private tutors required for such delivery can be secured by schools nationally. I'm hopeful there will be further news to share with you in next week's update, subject to receiving further detail in a timely manner from government.

Remote learning: thank you for your words of support and appreciation for our remote learning provision and the constructive feedback we have received to help develop it further. We have made a number of changes over recent months based on the evidence that has been emerging nationally and internationally about best practice. It's been a huge learning curve for all of us: teacher, student and parent/carer alike!

As a result, we have introduced a common structure for all remote learning. As far as possible, if we can get every lesson to look and sound the same, with a shared, common language around what students will be doing, learners are more likely to be successful. By keeping our lesson structures predictable, students can devote more resources to thinking hard about content. We have based our lesson structure of 'Activate: Explain: Practise: Reflect' on the guidance from the Education Endowment Fund (EEF).

Students in Years 7-10 continue to have work set in line with 50% of their curriculum time (2-3 hours per day) to support families and mitigate against the pressures on devices in some multi-child families. As you know, we have made the decision to set work at the beginning of each week so that children and families can plan their time most effectively. We appreciate that for some students when the list appears on Monday morning, it may feel overwhelming. If this is the case, we advise parents and students to use their school timetable as a guide and chunk the day into 30-minutes of each of the 5 subjects they would have done if they were in school.

Feedback to students is being shared via ClassCharts, but please be aware that this needs to be actively sought out. The developers of ClassCharts have informed us that push notifications are being enabled to send automatic alerts that feedback has been left by a teacher, but that is unlikely to be operational until September. In the meantime, please ask your child to check for whole-class feedback on the piece of work submitted so that they may 'green pen mark' and improve their work where required.

We are delighted that our recent feedback from teachers indicates that the vast majority of students continue to work hard and do their very best - we can't thank you enough for your support with this and we continue to be so proud of our students for their resilience and commitment to learning throughout a challenging time. Our provision continues to evolve based on feedback from students, parents/carers and teachers, and I thought it might be helpful to summarise what is now in place for each year group:

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Work set weekly via ClassCharts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regular, pre-recorded lessons	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Tutorials				Trials in PE, Technology & Geography from 26/6	✓ Maths	✓ from 15/6 via MS Teams
'Bubble' face-to-face teaching				✓	X	✓
Intervention groups				✓ Core+	✓ English/ Maths	✓
Microsoft virtual classrooms	All classes and all subjects will have virtual classrooms set up by September 2020 to enable a single platform for setting lessons and assignments, submission of work and feedback. Pre-recorded lessons/ group tutorials will be used where face-to-face teaching is not possible.					

Free School Meals (FSM): in case you have missed this news, the government has this week agreed to fund FSM vouchers for eligible families throughout the 6-week summer holiday. Please be advised that we will order these accordingly and ensure they are distributed before the summer break.


E-safety: the latest home e-safety activity packs for parents/carers from CEOP have been published this week. As always, simply copy and paste the relevant link into your browser and search:

- Guidance for parents/guardians on the below activity packs: <https://bit.ly/2zQ8cP7>
- Home activity packs for ages 11-13: <https://bit.ly/2WJcLUf>
- Home activity packs for ages 14+: <https://bit.ly/3cMneDX>

Good news: we were so thrilled this week to hear news of the success of Sarah Mayne in Year 12, whose philosophy essay has been shortlisted to the final of the National College of Humanities London Essay Competition from more than 5,000 entries nationally! Sadly, Sarah and her family are unable to attend the finals in London due to the COVID-19 situation, but her fabulous achievement can be marked and celebrated, nonetheless. Just knowing that her essay is being read by leading experts in the field is enough for Sarah she tells me, although I'm sure the cash prizes ranging from £250 to £1000 could add an extra cause for celebration! Whether Sarah wins a category or not at this prestigious national competition, she's our winner! Warmest congratulations, Sarah, and best of luck for the final judging.

As always, we continue to work together to ensure our young people are safe, happy and learning in these challenging times. Thanks for your ongoing support.

Kindest regards,



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