

Hele's School

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



Friday 26 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers: it is poignant that the official School Leaving Day for Year 11s is today, Friday 26th June, and it is so sad to think that last night would have been the Year 11 Prom at Elfordleigh, an important rite of passage where we had planned an opportunity to celebrate the end of GCSEs and the end of an era with our wonderful young people. Likewise, the Year 13 Leavers' Party would have been just around the corner and there would have been much excitement about marking the end of a 7-year journey for most and flying the Hele's nest to pastures new. We are all very much aware of the effect the pandemic has had in denying our leavers their moment to shine in a shared celebration of their time at Hele's and will strive to find an opportunity to get together again when restrictions allow.

Whilst the weekly Tutor email contact for our Class of 2020 will cease from this point onwards, young people and parents/carers will continue to receive email contact and regular updates about developments and we continue to welcome communication from you still. Pastoral and Sixth Form teams are still regularly emailing students with transition material, careers guidance and updates. Please encourage your child to keep an eye on School email accounts.

I'd like to say a huge 'thank you and well done' to our fabulous young people for the contribution they have made to Hele's School over their tenure with us. I always talk about 'pride in the badge' and of 'leaving the badge in a better place than you found it', and my goodness, I cannot fault our Leavers for the difference they have made to our community over the years; they undoubtedly leave a legacy and have set the bar high for younger students to reach. We wish our students all the very best of luck with future endeavours, whether returning to the Sixth Form at Hele's in September, heading off to College or University or stepping foot into the world of work or an apprenticeship. We hope our young people will take a positive experience and fond memories with them and remember long into the future that Hele's was their school and Hele's will always be their school - *#proudenoughtopop!*

At this stage, it is our understanding that, in line with current UK Government advice on the easing of lockdown, mass gatherings will continue to be prohibited in the months to come. This will clearly impact on the traditional on-site results days this year. Further arrangements about receipt of GCSE and A level results will be coming out to you very soon, along with details about the follow-up support and guidance available to ensure all children have an appropriate destination. In the meantime, our Pastoral and Sixth Form teams are continuing to work with Year 11 and Year 13 students who do not have a definite plan for next year. If your child falls into this category and you have not yet heard from us, please let us know and we can get in touch to offer support.

Uniform collection: At this time of year, we usually ask the parents and carers of Year 11 leavers to donate any uniform to School that is no longer needed. This allows us to support families that struggle with the cost of new uniform. If you do have any items in good condition, please let us know and we can make arrangements to collect uniform from you.

National Citizen Service's new initiative, 'One Million Hours of Keep Doing Good': as you may have heard, The NCS Trust made the decision to cancel this year's traditional NCS summer programme to respect social distancing in light of COVID-19. Nevertheless, Groundwork South – our local NCS team - has put together a remodelled FREE programme for any Year 10 - 12 to access over the summer holidays. With the country starting to get back on its feet and lockdown

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slowly being lifted, Groundwork South would like to offer your 15-17-year olds the opportunity between July 27th – August 10th to join a national effort to achieve one million hours of volunteering and social action this summer to help rebuild communities and create lasting positive change. A letter with provisional dates, the opportunities young people will encounter and details about how to sign up can be found on the School website. If your child was previously signed up to an NCS programme this summer, you should have received an email from NCS outlining this opportunity and how to get involved. Alternatively, your child can sign up online at: <https://wearencs.com/keep-doing-good>. Young people who participate in this summer's *Keep Doing Good* programme will still be eligible to take part in more traditional NCS programmes this coming autumn or summer 2021.

Year 10 exams: at this time of year, we would normally be preparing Year 10 students for their first set of mock exams, so that they get their first experience of planning revision timetable, get used to sitting in the exam halls and make use of the results to help plan our teaching and their learning for the year ahead. Clearly, at this time, it will not be possible to run these mock exams in the usual way, but we are still keen to provide an opportunity for our students. We have scheduled exam papers over the next three weeks, therefore, and for papers to be posted home to those students not attending School for their face-to-face provision at this time. All Year 10 and their parents/carers were emailed details of the exams earlier this week. Should you have any questions about the exams, please contact Clare Pomfret, Deputy Principal, at pomfret@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Mentors required for September: current Year 9 students have been emailed an application form to encourage interested students to apply for the important role of a Year 10 Mentor. The Mentor Scheme is an established tradition at Hele's and something we hold dear. We value the importance of using our wonderful students as ambassadors and role models for the incoming Year 7 on their first day of Secondary School in September. It's a proud but anxious time for new students and families alike – I'm sure you remember the feeling - and our Mentors have the very important job of ensuring a friendly and smiling face to put our new recruits at ease and to give them a warm, Team Hele's welcome. The Year 10 mentors play a vital role in supporting the younger students throughout the first term at Hele's, whether that is helping them to navigate the site or being a link between the student and tutor. The students who are successful with their application can achieve a Bronze Award by half term and they can progress to the Silver Award by completing other student leadership opportunities, such as the Diana Anti-Bullying Ambassador Award. All applications will need to be emailed to Mr Stone by Monday 6th July. I'd appreciate you actively encouraging your Year 9 child to apply for this important leadership position.

Remote learning: we all appreciate your ongoing support and encouragement with remote learning, and we understand just how demanding it has been. My most recent look at engagement levels on ClassCharts was really encouraging and I am heartened to see the vast majority of our students continue to try hard and are doing their best. Of course, working at home on a device is no substitute for a specialist teacher being in the room! The roll out of pre-recorded lessons and narrated PowerPoints is a move to bridging that gap and is gathering momentum, receiving positive feedback to date. After great success with Year 12 'live tutorials', we will be trialling Year 10 subject-specific tutorials with some classes in the coming weeks. If your child is involved in this trial you will be informed via email and provided with further details regarding giving your consent and for expectations/safeguarding protocols, so please look out for this. Please also keep your feedback coming, as we consider everything we receive about your experiences – good or bad – and use this to continually refine our provision.

Considerate and safe behaviour: the government's announcement of a further easing of social distancing needs to be considered with caution and respect. I'm sure you were as horrified as me to see pictures of a jam-packed Barbican earlier this week, and crowded beaches with no regard at all for social distancing; like it or not, the fact remains that we are still in the midst of a pandemic and we all need to be proportionate and careful in our actions and not become complacent in thinking we can socialise en masse. COVID-19 has not gone away and it is important we uphold government and Public Health England advice to keep ourselves, our families and our community safe.

I stress this because I have become aware of large groups of young people mixing in the community, not observing any form of social distancing and sometimes causing damage. This week I received a complaint from a member of the public about the litter left and damage done at Hardwick Woods in Plympton by a large group of school-age children. There is no firm evidence that Hele's students were involved in this anti-social behaviour, but nevertheless I would appreciate your support in reinforcing expectations with your children for meeting outdoors in groups of up to six and maintaining a 2-metre distance from those from other households, where possible. Likewise, all Plymouth schools this week received an intelligence update from the Police that they are finding more spent gas and nitrous oxide

canisters left by groups of young people across the City. Again, I pass this on to you so you can remain vigilant with where your children may be going and what they may be getting up to. I've no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Hele's students will be meeting friends and family in a sensible and safe way or staying at home and studying!

Return in September: at the time of writing, schools have received no further guidance on planning for a September return for all year groups. Please be assured that the Senior Leadership Team are working hard to model different scenarios in the meantime, and discussions continue at a Trust level with our 6 other Secondary Schools in WeST. Even at this early stage, it is still clear that a strict 'hierarchy of controls' with an emphasis on hand-washing and good hygiene will be central to any return plan. The CEO of the Trust, Rob Haring, will write to all parents next Friday, 3rd July, when we will have hopefully received further clarification from the government.

Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, has mentioned plans to extend 'bubbles' to include a whole class to 30. Our planned move to horizontal Tutor groups in September will certainly help facilitate this requirement, so it is timely that this planned change is being implemented in the new academic year. On the note of Tutor groups, I'd like to offer reassurances to children and to parents/carers that the wellbeing of our young people remains central to all our planning and we have put great thought into building groups. We are not yet at the point of confirming Tutor groups for September, however, as we are first going to 'test' them against the anticipated government guidance for reopening to ensure these groupings are appropriately configured, before confirming with families. Further details to follow in the coming weeks.

Virtual Sports Week, 6th – 12th July: we are delighted to announce that this year we will be running a virtual sports week to replace our annual sports day. Although we unfortunately cannot make the trip to Brickfields in July, we recognise the importance of keeping active to benefit our physical and mental health. In the week beginning Monday 6th July, students will receive PE homework on ClassCharts with 12 links - one for each of the 12 sporting challenges. The links will take the student to Microsoft Forms, where they will need to login using their School email address. Here they will find a video from one of our fabulous teaching staff explaining what they need to do for the challenge. Students and any family member can attempt the challenge and submit a score through the form. Although this is not compulsory, we encourage students and family members to get involved, have some enjoyment and complete as many challenges as possible. This will be great fun in what has been a challenging end to the academic year for all. Keep an eye on ClassCharts and see if you can beat the teachers! Please see the School website for more details.

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,



Justine Mason
Principal

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