

Hele's School

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



Friday 3 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Full and compulsory return to school in September for all children: The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, yesterday announced plans in Parliament for a compulsory return of all children to full-time education at the start of the autumn term, and published guidance for schools to support full opening. The caveat is that a “full return” of all pupils will be reconfirmed on August 11 after the latest COVID-19 data is considered. Should you be interested in reading the 37 pages of guidance for schools, the document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

In summary, COVID-secure measures will “remain in place to reduce the risk of transmission”, with schools asked to keep children in “class or year group sized ‘bubbles’ and encourage older children to keep their distance from each other and staff where possible”. Whilst this may sound straight forward, a great deal of thought and planning needs to now be put into arranging the logistics of a safe and purposeful return, as I’m sure you can imagine. As with the wider re-opening to Year 10 and Year 12, a comprehensive toolkit will be used to frame our plans and inform a robust risk assessment, and a Frequently Asked Questions document will be compiled and shared with families alongside plans for induction of students to familiarise themselves with new routines and expectations.

Please be assured that detailed planning is now underway across all Westcountry Schools Trust schools and further details will be shared in due course. In the meantime, I strongly recommend reading the guidance for parents and carers that was published yesterday to offer reassurances about what to expect for your children in the autumn. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

September Tutor groups: as you are aware, our planning for September (pre-lockdown) had been focused on moving our pastoral structure from a vertical Tutor group and House system for Years 8-11 to a Year Group structure. Whilst sharing the rationale and detail of this with students and families may have been diluted as our attention needed to be diverted to the demands of lockdown and remote learning, our planning for pastoral restructure has continued unabated throughout. Notwithstanding the strong educational and social principles that underpin our rationale for age-based Tutor groups, the government guidance for September opening published yesterday serves only to strengthen the move to a year group structure, as large ‘bubbles’ of children in a year group up to 240-strong will operate for the foreseeable future and children in different year groups should be kept separate from each other in School wherever possible.

We are now in a position to confirm your child’s Tutor for September and will be doing so imminently in a separate letter to be emailed to you. Please note that the restructure and new investment in extending our pastoral staffing means that each year group will have its own Head of Year and its own Pastoral Support Manager (PSM) from September. I am delighted to confirm 3 excellent appointments were made to these roles just last week and I have confidence that our wraparound care and support will be stronger for this restructure. Undoubtedly, there will be a need for this as we welcome children back after what will have been two full terms out of School and ensure they are supported and settled.

Check in plans for Years 7-10: related to September-planning, please note that we will conduct a formal Tutor ‘check in’ with all children in Years 7-10 before we break for the summer, likely to be in the form of a phone call home because we have to limit the number of people on site at School. This review will incorporate a welfare check, a farewell from the

Principal: Justine Mason

Seymour Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4LT

Telephone: 01752 337193 Fax: 01752 331460

email: heles.school@plymouth.gov.uk website: www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk

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current Tutor before students return to year-based groups in September, and an opportunity to capture and share strengths, areas for development and any anticipated interventions that may be required in the new academic year so that this information can be shared with the new Tutor to ensure a successful transition after the summer.

Exams for 2021: Students expecting to take exams and assessments next year, and their teachers, tutors, parents and carers, are understandably concerned about the disruption to their education caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Ofqual yesterday published their consultation on proposals designed to support students taking GCSEs and A levels in 2021. The consultation is open until Thursday 16 July, with final decisions announced in August.

Ofqual has confirmed that they *are* planning for exams and assessments to be taken next year and are consulting on a range of proposals for general qualifications including: adaptations to free up teaching time and give teachers more time to cover the full content and help relieve the pressure on students (e.g. by removing the requirement to record the spoken language assessment in GCSE English language; allowing GCSE students to observe (rather than undertake) practical science work; and assessing art and design students on their portfolio alone), and changes to the exam timetable - in particular, whether GCSE exams could start after half term, on 7 June 2021. Whilst we won't know the outcome of the consultation until the new academic year, we must continue to plan and prepare our students for a full exam series in summer 2021.

Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers: Due to the school closure in March, many students were unable to return textbooks that had been loaned by departments to support their GCSE and A level studies. These textbooks are crucial for our current Year 10 and Year 12 students who need to start preparing for the summer exams in 2021 and therefore need to be returned to School please. Our funding is limited, and we need to reissue textbooks to next year's GCSE and A-level students.

There will be subject collection boxes outside Reception, under the portico, every day until Friday 17th July. Please encourage your son/daughter to return any textbooks or Library books that they may have. On a related note, should students have any unwanted revision guides or books they may have purchased themselves to support their studies but no longer have a use for, and would like to 'gift' them to the incoming Year 11/Year 13, I know they will be gratefully received and put to good use! Please also put such resources in the boxes provided. Thank you for your support.

GCSE and A Level results: as stated in previous communications, the summer results days – an important part of the School calendar and ordinarily a time for young people, families and staff to come together to celebrate the determination, resilience and commitment of our students and their individual academic achievements – cannot happen in the same way this year due to COVID-19 and no large group gatherings being allowed. This is a real disappointment to us, as we would love to celebrate with our families and reinforce how proud we are of the of every student, but I am sure you understand why this event cannot go ahead as usual.

A Level and GCSE results will be emailed to YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL EMAIL account from 8am on 13th August (A Level) and 8am on 20th August (GCSE), and a copy of results posted to your home address on those days. We appreciate that some of you may want to speak to staff regarding your results and next steps, and we would actively encourage you to do so – we are in this together! You will be able to book appointments to talk to key staff using an online booking form that will be live on the front page of the School website nearer to results being issued in August. More details of these changes and ways of contacting us on these important days will be forwarded to Year 11 and Y13 parents/carers under separate cover.

E-Safety: online gaming can offer many positive experiences. It can give children and young people the chance to escape into a virtual world, to learn, and to connect with others. However, there is a risk of children and young people viewing inappropriate content in games and being contacted by adults seeking to exploit them. These latest CEOP activity packs on the 'Thinkuknow' website for parents and carers to deliver to their children explores how young people can stay safe while gaming:

- Age 11-13s - https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/11-13s/?utm_source=Thinkuknow&utm_campaign=176d7bc4c3-TUK_ONLINE_SAFETY_AT_HOME_30_06_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0b54505554-176d7bc4c3-55356561
- Age 14+ - https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/14-plus/?utm_source=Thinkuknow&utm_campaign=176d7bc4c3-TUK_ONLINE_SAFETY_AT_HOME_30_06_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0b54505554-176d7bc4c3-55356561

Updated government guidance published recently outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to receive support and advice. It is a good reference for parents and carers concerned about online safety. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

5 Simple Steps to Support Teens during Covid-19 and over the Summer: it is not uncommon for young people to feel particularly anxious and uncertain currently as their routine and lives are being turned upside down. A useful guide, written by a GP who is a renowned young people's mental health expert, which supports parents/carers to in turn support their teenagers, can be found on the Hele's School website in the COVID-19 section. It is well worth a read and does exactly what it says in offering simple strategies for supporting young people through this challenging time.

Virtual Sports Week (6th-12th July) – as mentioned last week, Hele's Virtual Sports Week goes live on Monday 6th July. Students, parents and staff can compete in 12 sporting challenges across the week. There will be 12 links to Microsoft Forms posted on ClassCharts under PE homework for students to watch a video of the challenge and then attempt themselves. Competitors will then fill in the relevant Microsoft Form once they have completed the challenge and enter their score. Please look out for the links on ClassCharts on Monday under PE homework. Please see the School website or email Mr Garforth for more details. Good luck and have fun!

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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