

Hele's School

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



10th July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

First, we want to say that we are all so much looking forward to having Team Hele's back together! We all recognise - probably now more than ever - the importance of young people attending school for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. We have missed our students, families and colleagues so much and we are absolutely delighted the government has said all year groups can come back in September.

As you know, government guidance published last week confirmed that all children and young people in all year groups will return to school full time from the beginning of the autumn term, unless there is a statutory reason for children to be absent. This decision has been made because the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased, the NHS Test and Trace system is operational and our collective understanding of the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments in schools has increased. However, it is important that you are confident we are doing everything we can to reduce the risks of transmission of the virus and ensure that Hele's School can open safely and sensibly to all our students in the new academic year. We have been working hard to ensure this can happen and I am pleased to now be able to update you on our plans for return in September.

We are poignantly aware that many of our students will not have been in a school setting since 20 March 2020 and it is, therefore, our priority to support our students in feeling confident about their return to School after the summer holiday. Your child's Head of Year will next week share a short and informative video to ensure that our students are informed about: when to return to School, why year groups are restricted to particular zones and what that means in practice, where to go when they arrive, what the new routines and expectations are (e.g. around washing and sanitising hands regularly, including before and after they eat, when they arrive and leave, and at other key times), how break 1 and break 2 will operate, etc.

We will also ensure a letter is sent home early next week to reiterate arrangements and confirm your child's tutor and tutor base for the coming academic year, as well as the details of other key professionals who are there to assist a successful transition back to School. We have addressed lots of questions we anticipate you will have about the return plan, and these FAQs can be found on the School website and are also circulated with this letter. We will update this document regularly, so do please forward any questions you have that are unanswered and we can add them to the list to make sure you are fully informed.

We will continue to adhere to what the government calls the 'system of controls' – the set of actions that schools must take – which are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection'. Of course, Hele's has remained open throughout the lockdown period to vulnerable children and the children of Key Workers and, since June 15th, has had Year 12 students on site alongside almost 80% of the Year 10 cohort each day. We have already done a great deal of preparation and ground work through considering and implementing safe routines during this time, meaning we are able to confidently transfer this knowledge and planning to a bigger scale in readiness for September, and hence are in a very strong position for full opening. Many of the actions in the 'prevention' section are very familiar to us from the guidance we've been following throughout the summer term: handwashing, 'catch it, bin it, kill it', enhanced cleaning, etc. The main differences are in the requirements around minimising contact and maintaining social distancing, *wherever possible*.

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To support this ambition, we will make some small but important tweaks to the structure and timing of our school day, with new routines that will slightly alter the usual experience of a day at Hele’s and an allocated zone of the site assigned to each year group for learning, socialising and eating. We will also stagger the start of the school year, with different year groups arriving on different days. This will ensure we can build up to a full school attendance carefully by training and inducting staff and students into new routines and expectations and allowing us to be responsive should challenges arise over the first days back. An overview of the staggered start to the academic year is set out below:

Year group	Start date	Entry point	Start time	End time	Tutor base & Tutor	Learning Zone	Head of Year	Pastoral Support Manager	Senior Leader Link
7	Tues 8 th Sept.	East gate, Seymour Road (Stonebarton end)	8.40am	3.00pm	To be confirmed in separate letter.	Maths block and ramp/car park area (no cars)	Mrs Crosley	Mrs Keen	Mrs Crawford
8	Weds 9 th Sept.	Plymbridge Road gate	8.40am	3.00pm		Science block and Main Hall	Mrs Skingle	Mrs Parker	Mrs Crawford
9	Thurs 10 th Sept.	Plymbridge Road gate	9.00am	3.20pm		English, top playground & Piazza	Miss Prifti	Mrs Adamson	Mrs Clapham
10	Weds 9 th Sept.	West gate, Seymour Road	8.40am	3.00pm		West Quad classrooms and front play area	Mrs Aldersley	Miss Glasspoole	Ms Clapham
11	Thurs 10 th Sept.	East gate, Seymour Road (Stonebarton end)	9.00am	3.20pm		East Quad classrooms & middle play area	Mr Carwardine	Mrs Watt	Ms Clapham
12	Tues 8 th Sept.	Trelawney Road gate (side entrance)	9.00am	3.20pm		P16 Block	Mrs Curtis		Mr Stone
13	Weds 9 th Sept.	Trelawney Road gate (side entrance)	8.40am	3.00pm		P16 Block	Mrs Curtis		Mr Stone

In addition to the safety measures set out above and the use of zoned year groups to prevent ‘bubbles’ from coming into close contact with each other wherever practicable, we are well prepared in terms of securing the wellbeing and academic progress of students. We recognise that there may be knowledge and understanding to be bridged when the students return in the autumn, and we have very carefully planned our curriculum so that we can assess and respond to need – both academic and emotional wellbeing - so that every child is able to flourish.

As much as possible, we want to maintain normality for our students and staff and ensure their learning and wellbeing is supported to the max, and hence we will run a full curriculum offer in line with each child’s new timetable for September. All subjects will be offered as normal and delivered by subject specialists, and there will be no watering down of the curriculum intent or implementation. What will be different, however, is that each year group will have all their lessons in a defined zone of School, and hence may have limited access to specialist teaching rooms at times (but remembering they will still have a subject specialist teacher). The exception to this will be for groups taking exams in summer 2021, where supervised access to specialist rooms (e.g. Art, Technology, Science) has been factored into our planning, as and when required. In all other instances, teachers are working creatively to ensure the learning and curriculum experience remains robust - for example, by filming practical demonstrations in advance to share with students where they cannot be physically undertaken in a general classroom.

With regards to behaviour, the same expectations around being ‘Committed, Respectful, Safe’ will apply to ensure all students are able to learn and are safe. We recognise the difficult situation we have all been in and a number of pastoral and support workers, teachers and SLT will be on hand to support students who are struggling with our expectations and routines and to give students the time and space to reflect and get it right so everybody can learn. That said, due to the risks posed by COVID-19, we all have a heightened awareness of the need to ensure the behaviour of any student does not impact on the health or wellbeing of another. Our low levels of tolerance for poor or anti-social behaviour remain the same, and any student disrupting the learning or wellbeing of others will be sanctioned in line with the amended behaviour policy and procedures, which can be found on the Hele’s website. Added to our behaviour policy are deliberate actions around poor hygiene and deliberate disregard of infection mitigation, e.g. refusing to sanitise hands when directed to, threatening to or actually spitting at someone, deliberately coughing in the direction of another student or member of staff, or invading the personal space of another student or member of staff.

Please note that although we will not be running the usual procedures for internal isolation at Hele's or external isolation at another WeST school in the same manner for the time being, we will continue to run after-school detentions. Government guidance accepts that students from other bubbles will undoubtedly be required to mix for some purposes, and this is an example where 'permeable' bubbles may be called into operation. In the likely situation that students from different year groups will undertake after-school detention in the same room, social distancing and hygiene safeguards will be employed to minimise any close contact between a small number of cross-year groups in the same room.

As always, though, our intent is for students to be happy, content, and relaxed while in School, and we will continue working hard to ensure this remains the case and to reward those good behaviours around being 'Committed, Respectful, Safe'.

We have reworked the timing of breaks throughout the day, so from September we will have 2 x 30-minute breaks throughout the day (called break 1 and break 2) rather than a 20-minute break and a 40-minute lunch break, as is usual. This is a model that has worked very well since wider reopening in June and is much preferred by our Year 10 students who have been attending this term. With our 'normal' school day structure, we have become increasingly conscious that more and more children are buying and eating their lunch at breaktime (late morning) and spending their lunchtime playing or socialising. With that in mind and given we will now have 6 dispersed food points across the site rather than one centralised canteen, we will move our catering provision to break 1 (11-11.30am). The speed at which we can serve children will be much faster from having more serving points, and hence we are able to extend break 1 by 10 minutes (to 11-11.30am) and reduce the traditional lunch break, now called break 2, by 10 minutes (from 1.30-2pm).

Every child, and every home, has had a different experience of this period of closure and with home learning. Whilst we know most families will be delighted that schools are reopening, there may be some parents or who children who feel anxious about returning: if this applies to you, please do not suffer in silence. Please contact us as soon as you can and we will work with you to ensure you have all the answers you need, to help you feel reassured and to address any concerns you might have.

We will, of course, also need your help and support to keep School safe as we return fully. If your child or somebody else in your household has Coronavirus symptoms, they must stay at home until tested and advised that they can return. Likewise, the government guidance says that if there is a confirmed case at School then we should work with the relevant health authorities to ensure that everyone who was in close contact with them when they were infectious is notified and self-isolates for fourteen days – in reality, this is likely to be all students and staff they have been in a classroom with.

Everyone will need to play a part in keeping the virus out of School. We request that students avoid going into shops on the way into School and that they walk or cycle to School if they possibly can. If they have absolutely no option but to use public transport, they should wear a face covering while travelling which is in line with current government advice. They will need to carry with them a plastic bag so that they can safely remove their face covering and store it hygienically before entering School.

We have received several emails from parents/carers asking how best to support School and their children in preparing for September. We very much appreciate your support in working with us in a number of ways, including:

- Prepare your child adequately by reinforcing the importance of good hygiene routines, such as sanitising and washing hands regularly. Also discuss the ways in which School will be different and the importance of adhering to expectations and routines.
- Send your child to School properly equipped with their Super 6, a packed lunch and drink (wherever possible) and dressed in the full and usual Hele's School uniform (including Hele's PE kit for practical PE lessons).
- Understand that the times of the day, groupings and the allocated gate for entry/exit to School are non-negotiable due to safety and operational reasons.

Undoubtedly, the lockdown period has proven challenging for us all, but the resilience and strength of our community throughout has been a joy to behold. Families and staff have pulled together to ensure our children felt safe and supported, and we have shown just how much can be achieved in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. It has been said that when we are in dark place it can feel like we've been buried, but we need to look at this experience

as having been planted, not buried. We know that growth and the bearing of fruit comes from being planted, and I've no doubt that we will emerge from this experience stronger for it and that our young people will return to School in September ready to learn and continue their growth.

The safety and wellbeing of all members of our community remains of paramount importance to us and I hope this letter serves to reassure you of the thoroughness with which we approach our thinking. As always, we are keen to hear from you and to receive feedback, so please do contact us with any questions or thoughts you may have. We will keep in touch to ensure you have all the information you need before returning in September. Tutors have enjoyed making phone contact with their tutees over this last week and getting to understand more about each individual child's experience throughout lockdown and their hopes and anxieties about returning in September. Those calls will continue throughout this week, so do expect a call if it hasn't yet been made. Where a Tutor has been unable to get through by phone, they may have left a message or followed up with an email. I'd be grateful if you would encourage your child to reply to that message by email where the call has been missed, so they have a chance to 'check in' before the summer break and ensure they are prepared for the new academic year.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming all our staff and students back to School in September so we can be together as a whole school community once again. On behalf of all staff and governors, we want to thank you for everything you have done to support your children's success over this period, and to support Hele's School.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal



Carl Atkinson
Chair of Governors

Principal: Justine Mason

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