

Hele's School

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



Friday, 28 August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Reopening of School September 2020

I hope you have had a restful and enjoyable summer to date and that your child is looking forward to the start of a new academic year and a full-time return to school in just over a week's time. Undoubtedly, it has been a challenging few months for everyone and we are all looking forward to returning to routines and structured learning. It seems such a long time since we were all together on site and we are very excited to welcome all students back and, in particular, to induct our Year 7s into their new Hele's family.

I felt it pertinent to write to remind everyone of the return to school arrangements I shared on Friday, 10 July, not only as a refresher of the key changes to the design of the school day and learning experience, but also to reassure parents/carers and students of the measures put in place to ensure a safe return to school. With so much attention in the national press at the moment, and quite rightly so, there is a danger that there will be heightened anxiety amongst many families as the date for return draws nearer, but I'd like to offer my assurances that a great deal of planning and preparation has continued over the summer holiday to ensure we have a safe and positive return for the whole school community. Whilst no situation can ever be risk free, I would like to reassure you that we have worked, and will continue to work, tirelessly to make the school environment as safe as possible for all users. We are ready, and very excited at the prospect of having Team Hele's back together!

Working Together to Minimise the Risks: Getting 'back to school safely' is the national directive and we are fully prepared, but we will need the complete support and cooperation of our parents, carers, students and staff to ensure everybody plays their part in achieving this by:

- ensuring that anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or has someone in their household who does, does not attend school – this means if your child, or someone in your household, has symptoms you should **not** send them in.
- engaging with the NHS Test and Trace process so that cases can be identified and action taken – this means if your child develops symptoms, you should arrange for him/her to get a test immediately and you should inform school of the results of the test.

A reminder that the school has a detailed Risk Assessment and Action Plan for full reopening in September, which is framed around the comprehensive Westcountry Schools Trust Toolkit for Reopening, a copy of which can be found on the website. You may also find the government guidance for parents and carers around the safe reopening of schools helpful, which can be found by clicking [here](#).

Face masks: Informed by the latest government guidelines and public health advice for schools in England about face masks, **ALL STAFF AND STUDENTS (UNLESS EXEMPT) WILL BE EXPECTED TO WEAR A FACE COVERING IN ALL COMMUNAL AREAS AND CORRIDORS (NOT CLASSROOMS) AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A MASK LIES WITH THE INDIVIDUAL, AS WITH ANY OTHER PIECE OF UNIFORM OR KIT.** In line with our drive to become a single-use plastic-free school, we strongly recommend a reusable mask rather than a single-use mask. Please note that introducing face masks is an extra preventative measure that is being implemented across all Westcountry Schools

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Trust secondaries, and the Trust rationale and guidelines for this is sent with this letter for your information. Please read it carefully and share the details with your child/ren.

Hygiene: It is vital that firm routines for hand and respiratory hygiene are maintained at all times by all school users and these will include:

- Ensuring everyone cleans their hands more often than usual, including when they arrive at school, before eating and when they move between classrooms. Cleaning hands can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser (which is widely available throughout the school site and at each egress point).
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene, by adhering to the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. To assist with this, all classrooms will be equipped with tissues and covered waste disposal bins.
- Minimising contact and maintaining distance, as far as possible, particularly from adults in school. Students should attempt to maintain a 2m distance from their teachers and other adults who work with them. They should also be mindful that some adults and students are more vulnerable and should particularly respect social distancing with these people.
- In preparation for reopening, we have purchased considerable quantities of hand sanitiser, tissues and antibacterial wipes, which will be available in all rooms for all site users.

Keeping the school site clean is also a major priority in minimising the risk of infection. Below is a summary of key measures:

- The school is currently undergoing a full 'deep clean', in line with government guidelines.
- We have increased our cleaning capacity to deliver an enhanced, comprehensive daily cleaning schedule throughout the school day - our Cleaning team will be on site daily to clean frequently touched surfaces, as well as thoroughly cleaning areas used by students from different 'bubbles'.
- Staff will participate by wiping down their work areas at the end of each lesson using anti-bacterial wipes provided. Students may also be involved in wiping their work space down should they be required to move to a specialist teaching room that may have been accessed by others (e.g. an Art or Technology room).

Year Group 'Bubbles': In line with government guidance, we have developed plans designed to minimise the risk of transmission within school by reducing the opportunities for students to mix as much as possible. At Hele's School, this will involve students remaining within their year group 'bubbles' throughout the school day. Students will remain in their 'bubble' (either indoors or outdoors) during social time and will eat lunch in their designated area.

Whilst staff members will need to be mobile across bubbles, they will respect the same hygiene requirements, maintain 2m social distancing with other adults and will 'teach from the front' of the classroom where possible (maintaining distance from students in class). To minimise students congregating in big groups indoors, there will be no year group assemblies during the Autumn term. All assemblies and briefings, including the important welcome and orientation assembly at the start of term, will be delivered virtually via MS Teams into designated tutor rooms.

Curriculum: Whilst there will be a focus on ensuring students have opportunities to recover any lost learning and 'catch up' during next term, I can assure you that there will be no narrowing of the curriculum. The full complement of subjects will be delivered by specialist teachers, even if there needs to be some modification of activities in practical subjects, like Technology, Music, Drama or Science. Please be advised that staff are exploring all sorts of creative ways to ensure hands-on learning and immersion in practical subjects like the creative and performing arts continues wherever possible and is safe to do so!

In line with other WeST schools, for the first term at least, there will be no extra-curricular activities or trips. This will enable teachers and students to focus on adapting to the new routines and to minimise contact between students from different bubbles. This will include Music lessons delivered by peripatetic teachers. We will recommence extra-curricular provision only when guidance and our own risk assessment suggests it is safe to do so, but we hope this will be in the not too distant future.

Behaviour: To maintain the usual good order and safety of all the school community, the school will maintain its high expectations in terms of behaviour and conduct from the outset. 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, which can be found on the Hele's website. The updated policy makes clear reference to our approach to deliberate actions around poor hygiene and disregard for 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; all incidents of this nature will be handled with the utmost seriousness.

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'.

To enable all students to understand what will be expected of them and how they can contribute to the smooth running of the new arrangements, time will be spent outlining this as part of their induction.

Catering: Each bubble will have its own food service trolley to facilitate hygiene control and help manage timing constraints. The quality of the food will remain high and students will be able to choose from a range of options. However, we are asking students to bring a packed lunch, drink and snack, wherever possible, to help reduce the pressure on food service, at least until we establish new routines and get into a new rhythm of service. Those in receipt of Free School Meals will be catered for.

The School Day : As confirmed in my letter on 10th July and reinforced in the videos shared with families by Heads of Year on 15th July, we have made 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 are also staggering 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 carefully by training and inducting staff and students in the 'next normal'. I do appreciate that accessing at different times or via an allocated gate may cause some inconvenience or frustration for some families, but a great deal of thought has been put into the logistics of managing 1350 children and 200 staff safely and ensuring year group bubbles are kept separate as far as possible whilst on the school site. I appreciate your patience and support with these changes, knowing there is a strong health and wellbeing philosophy that underpins them. The arrangements for the whole school are summarised in the table below, and a one-page infographic for your child's year group has been sent alongside this letter, which provides an at-a-glance overview of first day, times, gate, learning zone, social space, catering, etc.

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 Pifti	Mrs Adamson	Ms 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 Watts	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

Attendance and Punctuality: School attendance will again be mandatory from the beginning of the new academic year. If your child is not able to attend, please contact the student absence line in the usual way. If the absence is COVID-19 related, please ensure the school is provided with the appropriate details.

I would like to stress the importance of students arriving punctually at their designated time (but no more than 10 minutes early) and via their assigned access point to minimise contact with other year groups.

The school's term dates are published on our website. I ask that all parents/carers ensure that no family holidays are booked during term time as legislation prevents me from authorising these unless in very exceptional circumstances. Given the incredible disruption to students' education caused by the pandemic, minimising time out of school is vital to enable us to get all students on track with their education as quickly and effectively as possible.

Travel To and From School: Where at all possible, students should avoid traveling by public transport, ideally walking or cycling to and from school. All bike racks will be accessible at the beginning and end of the school day – students should use those closest to their zone. Where it is necessary to travel by bus, students must wear a face mask and should ensure they follow the travel provider's social distancing guidelines at all times. We are asking all families who choose to drop off or collect their child by car to support our student safety and traffic calming initiatives by dropping them off away from the immediate vicinity of the allocated gate and asking them to walk to school from there. Please do not enter the school site without prior permission or drop off in the immediate vicinity of the school gates as it creates a hazard for all our community. Students should arrive on time, but not too early, and should report to their tutor room.

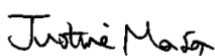
Uniform and Equipment: Students must wear full school uniform and be fully equipped for all lessons with their Super 6 (blue or black pen, green pen, pencil, ruler, mini whiteboard kit and Knowledge Organiser). Please note, Knowledge Organisers will be given to all students at the start of term. Students will not be able to share equipment with their peers and will be required to carry their books and equipment for their timetabled lessons in an appropriately-sized school bag. Full details of the school uniform can be found on the website – please ensure you refer to this where there is any uncertainty regarding suitable uniform, particularly with regards to skirts and shoes.

Finally ... I hope this information is helpful in providing a summary of the arrangements for students returning and the key measures that will be implemented to keep them safe. The FAQs document shared in July has been updated to reflect government guidance over the summer and also some questions that were posed by parents and students and can be found on the school website. Whilst we know most families will be delighted that school is reopening, there may be some parents, carers or 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.

Hele's School is built on the positive relationships and mutual respect between staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. The current situation has meant that we have not had the luxury of spending time working together closely in recent times. We are confident, however, that over the coming weeks, with your support, we will quickly re-establish our routines and expectations and reconnect as a learning community, so that Hele's School and all within it can continue to grow and flourish. We recognise that things may not always go smoothly or as intended, no matter how thorough the planning that has gone on, so I appreciate your support in being patient as we all bed into new routines and ways of working, some of which are very different. And do keep talking to us – we are in this together, we all want the best for your children and together we can do this!

Here's to happier, healthier and brighter days ahead for all!

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal



Carl Atkinson
Chair of Governors

Principal: Justine Mason

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