

Hele's School

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



Friday, 25 September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Continuation of education: earlier this week, the Prime Minister announced a series of new COVID-19 restrictions that began to come into force from yesterday, as well as stating clearly that children and young people must continue to receive an education – an ambition that we wholeheartedly agree with. As outlined in my letter to families last week, we continue to work hard around implementing control measures to keep as many young people and staff on site as possible and for as long as possible. Our model of remote learning continues to be refined in the background so we are absolutely ready to ensure a high-quality continuation of education in the event of needing to send a year group bubble (or part of) home to self-isolate for 14 days in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. I'm pleased to say that we have not had to test this remote learning model yet, and long may that remain – we all want our school community to remain healthy and attending school! I'm grateful to parents and carers for 'gatekeeping' any students feeling under the weather and keeping them at home until they are fit and well enough to return to the classroom. I also thank families for being alert and pragmatic in only seeking a COVID test where there are clear symptoms:

- high temperature – feeling hot to touch on the chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature);
- new, continuous cough – coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual);
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal.

Your swift and supportive action has meant that our attendance, both this week and since a full return, has remained high at 95%, which is commendable. I attach to this email a useful quick guide for parents/carers from Plymouth City Council regarding COVID-19 absence.

COVID-19 testing availability: we are very aware that in Devon and Cornwall, as elsewhere, there have been delays in accessing tests. A reminder that it is not possible to get a test by arriving at the Testing Centre without an appointment and you should not go to the hospital (Emergency Department) or visit your GP for a test. The Local Authority has set up an additional local testing site this week in Plymouth so if you are unable to book a local slot for a COVID-19 test, please email d-ccg.cornwalldevon.urgenttesting@nhs.net explaining that the test is for a child attending a Plymouth school. The Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) team will triage those families with children and adults with symptoms and book them in for a test and provide information on how to get to the site. A priority is given to Key Worker families, to help support the local Key Worker workforce and get staff back to work and children back to school.

Test & Trace: yesterday, NHS Test and Trace launched the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) as another measure to help control the spread of COVID-19. It will do this by alerting people who may have been exposed to infection so that they can take action. An information sheet for parents is attached from the government. The app is available to download for anyone aged 16 and over, which means that some students in year 11, students in years 12, 13 as well as staff and other adults, will be eligible to use the app and benefit from its features. Please note that it is down to individuals to

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decide whether they wish to engage with this facility, but the school policy on the use of mobile phones remains as usual – phones should be on silent and kept out of sight for the duration of the school day. This policy, however, will not impede the use of the Test and Trace app for those students 16+ who wish to use it.

Post-16 delivery model from Monday 28th September: we are constantly reviewing how we can support our learners whilst ensuring physical contact is reduced during travel between lessons and social time. Being a successful Sixth Form has its challenges and, although we are absolutely delighted to now have over 210 learners in our Post-16 provision after another strong year of recruitment, it does mean that the Sixth Form building is now very full! Post-16 students have made a very positive start to the academic year and have established successful routines and expectations, but having now worked through a full fortnightly cycle of the timetable, we feel it would be prudent to adapt our current model of delivery to the Sixth Form so that we reduce contact between year groups and reduce risk further. The structures we are putting in place from Monday will enable us to operate two smaller and distinct bubbles (Year 12 and Year 13), rather than the existing overarching Post-16 bubble. It will also enable a more forensic track and trace within each year group bubble in the event of a confirmed positive case, thereby enabling identification of smaller groups of students for self-isolation and maximising the number of students in the Sixth Form who can safely remain in full-time, onsite study. Students will continue to access and exit the site from the Trelawney Road gate but, from Monday, will attend school for reduced tutor contact and taught lessons only, leaving the site to study from home for the remainder of the day once their lessons have ended. Mr Stone, Director of Post-16, will contact parents/carers of Year 12 and Year 13 separately via InTouch with a detailed outline of how the new system will operate. Please expect that communication later today.

Heads up: over the coming weeks, we will be sending out some important surveys and information via InTouch, so do keep a look out and please respond accordingly. One communication will be an online survey to Year 7 parents and carers to help us to accurately identify Key Worker families. This will be important for planning our onsite 'EduCare' provision for the children of essential workers in times of reduced onsite delivery or local lockdown. We already hold an extensive database of Key Worker families from the last time we surveyed the whole school community in the run-up to the March national lockdown. For families in Years 8 – 13, if your circumstances have changed since the last time you completed the survey and you believe you may not be on our existing Key Worker school list, please contact Ms Clapham, Assistant Principal, at clapham@heles.plymouth.sch.uk

Another survey, aimed at all those in Years 7 – 13 who are in receipt of Free School Meals or who have been in the past 6 years, will look to identify where there may be difficulties in accessing remote learning through lack of access to a PC, laptop or tablet at home and/or access to the internet. Having a clear picture of access to devices will help shape our remote learning provision and ensure it is accessible to all students. Again, any questions should be directed towards Ms Clapham at clapham@heles.plymouth.sch.uk

Emotional health and wellbeing: please find attached a flyer outlining 3 strands of support for young people's mental health that young people at Hele's are able to engage with. I am pleased to confirm that just this week our socially-distanced face-to-face counselling provision has been extended further through Young Devon, meaning we can increase the number of students accessing this provision each week. There are clear criteria for accessing Young Devon counselling, which is managed by the Pastoral Team. Should you wish to discuss accessing this support for your child, please contact your child's Head of Year.

Reminders: as the weather has started to turn this week, it is a timely reminder to all to ensure that students are dressed appropriately for the weather. This is particularly pertinent given a number of students continue to arrive way before their allocated access time and have to be held in an open area on school site until the previous year group bubble has entered the building safely and they can be allowed access to their allocated inside space to prevent bubbles from mixing. It would be a great help if students could arrive as close to their allotted time as possible please – 8.30am for an 8.40am start for Years 7, 8 & 10, and 8.50am for a 9am start for Years 9 & 11.

Virtual Open Evening: we are only too aware of how frustrating it must be if you are a parent or carer of a Year 6 child choosing a secondary school at this time. Like the many schools who normally delight in opening our doors to prospective families at this time of year, we do not feel it is safe or appropriate to run an onsite event. However, we are really excited about being able to offer a live event via the Hele's School YouTube channel on Wednesday 30th September from 5.30-6.30pm, and hope that we are still able to convey why we think Hele's School is a special place to be, albeit via a live broadcast rather than face-to-face. We would be pleased if prospective students and their

parents, carers or extended family members are able to join us on Wednesday to find out more. The event will be streamed live via our YouTube Channel. Follow the link at <https://www.youtube.com/helesschoolplymouth> and subscribe for free in advance to make sure you don't miss out!

Good news: there was much excitement this week as our new dining furniture arrived in the Main Hall. Whilst unable to be used as a whole-school communal eating space at present, Year 8 will undoubtedly benefit from having the new tables and chairs in their social zone.

To end on a high, we were pleased and proud to hear of the success of Ethan Philipson in Year 12, who has won Basketball England's 'Young Official of the Year' award for his role as a referee at all levels of local league basketball. Congratulations to Ethan on his wonderful achievement!

Please do keep school posted of the significant accomplishments of your son or daughter beyond school – in a world that is currently heavy on uncertainty and gloom, it is always a delight to be able celebrate the resilience and amazing endeavours of our young people. And on that note, a huge 'well done' to all those students who have racked up a phenomenal amount of achievement points this week. The ratio of rewarding success to sanctioning unwanted behaviours in ClassCharts since our return to school is 97% positive praise to 3% sanctions, our best performance indicators to date!

Thank you again for your continued support.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal

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