

Hele's School

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



Friday, 20 November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

News this week of a breakthrough for a vaccine for COVID-19 undoubtedly brought a cheer the world round; do we dare to dream there could be some semblance of normality on the horizon? The signs are incredibly positive, but we cannot become complacent and think we can relax our control measures and today has made reminded us all of that.

You will know from my communication earlier this afternoon (and apologies for the delay in some parents receiving this in a timely manner due to an unplanned evacuation caused by the fire alarm wrongly being set off) that we have had a confirmed positive case in Year 9 and a confirmed positive case in Year 10 today. This has resulted in a total of 102 young people needing to self-isolate and access remote learning now until early December.

I have today discussed both cases through at length with the Department for Education, Plymouth Public Health, Plymouth Local Authority and the Executive Leadership Teams of the Westcountry Schools Trust and have on good authority that the action taken is a precautionary yet proportionate measure and the correct action. Please be advised that I have also commissioned the support of a commercial cleaning company to undertake a whole-site 'fogging' process and a deep clean of all areas in the school over the weekend, as an extra control measure before re-opening on Monday.

Whilst there will undoubtedly be better times ahead, we need to do all we can to keep each other safe through following control measures in the meantime, both in and out of school. I thank you for your ongoing support with this endeavour.

Stakeholder survey: We are in the midst of an important piece of work where we are gathering the feedback of our school community on things that have gone well since the September full return to school and areas where some changes may improve our experience further. Staff have completed an anonymous online survey this week and we will be asking students to do the same in their Tutor periods over the coming two weeks. The parent/carer voice is incredibly important in this work too, and our intention is to contact by phone a representative sample of parents and carers from across all year groups to conduct a more personal, qualitative feedback opportunity. The outcome of this work will be to help shape our model of provision going forward into term 3, from January onwards. If you'd really like to be involved in this then please email me directly at masonj@heles.plymouth.sch.uk and I will make sure you are added to the contact list. Your voice is important to us.

Bike safety: With the light fading after school, I have concern that several cyclists do not have appropriate clothing and safety kit to keep them and others safe on the roads this winter. If your child cycles to school, please can you ensure they have basic kit, including hi viz/reflective clothing, rear lighting, forward lighting and reflectors? Much of this kit costs just a few pounds per item, but it is priceless in the job it does for protecting your child and other road users. We have been in contact with The Bike Doctor, who is preparing to come to school to check bike safety with our children and conduct some routine maintenance, but in the interim your support in checking basic safety features is paramount. Mr Reynolds, Physics teacher and keen cyclist, has offered to liaise with students and parents regarding what is available and indicate examples which are easily removed to avoid any potential problems with them being

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interfered with when the bike is left somewhere. If you'd like some support with this, please contact Mr Reynolds at reynolds@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Children in Need: The total amount raised for children in need last Friday was £1,003.14. Thanks for everyone's support - a really great Team Hele's effort!

Year 11 Mocks: Best of luck to our Year 11s, who are about to embark on their GCSE mock exams from next week. I have been incredibly impressed with the commitment of Year 11, and in recent weeks we have seen an attendance rate at nightly after-school revision and catch up sessions of around 80% of the cohort, which equates to over 160 young people.

In a sporting context, grit and determination was personified by Joe O'Connor and his team mates this week, as Exeter City U16s beat Crewe Alexandra U16s in the EFL Floodlit Cup 7-3, after being 1-3 down at half time. What a comeback, proving that there's always plenty to play for before until the final whistle, despite feeling that things are stacked against you. A great analogy for our GCSE students as they look ahead to their final exams next summer. I've no doubt our Year 11s will have this fighting spirit and will rise to the challenge of assessment and perform well. Hard work pays!

Wishing you a restful weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal

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