

Hele's School

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



Friday, 27 November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Christmas planning is now underway with a little more surety in the Mason household, as it is in millions of households across the UK, now we have confirmation of the government's winter plan, which can be read [here](#). The rules of engagement have changed to give some flexibility, which is most welcome, though it is clear that we all need to continue to adhere to the restrictions in place to protect the health and wellbeing of ourselves, our loved ones and others. Nevertheless, there is a clear marker in the sand that encourages us all to safely and carefully plot a 'route back to normality' over the coming months. We cannot be complacent, but we can be optimistic and we can start to move forward with greater confidence.

Looking ahead to January: As you know from previous communications prior to our full re-opening in September, we have kept our model of delivery around the school day and organisation of learning under close scrutiny. A formal review point exists in the school calendar for this stage in Term 2, and this important piece of work is well under way.

The ever-changing science and guidance for schools around track and trace of close contacts over the past 6 weeks alone has enabled a far more targeted and forensic process for identifying close contacts of a confirmed positive case and directing self-isolation of far fewer people, in conjunction with Public Health advice and guidance. The advice to collapse a whole year group bubble or half year group bubble that prevailed back in September is now much different in schools, with a requirement now for only those who have been in close or proximity contact with a positive case to self-isolate. Remember, a 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic and up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). This includes:

- having a *face-to-face* conversation *within one metre or within one metre for one minute or longer without a face-to-face conversation* (assumes no masks are worn)
- contact *within 2 metres for more than 15 minutes, or*
- having *skin-to-skin* physical contact.

As we continue to evolve our model for delivery in readiness for Term 3, please be assured that I will keep you fully informed of the emerging plan at every step of the way, so please do keep a close eye on your email over the remaining weeks of this term so you don't miss important information; I will continue to update you each Friday, but as always, should you have any questions or feedback then please do contact me.

Exams: Our Year 11 students reach the mid-point of their Mock Exams today and what a fantastic start they have made! Having missed the opportunity to sit their formal end of Year 10 exams in the summer due to the school closure, this mock period serves as the students' first experience of taking examinations in formal conditions - and they have risen to the challenge exceptionally well. The feedback from the Exams Office and our team of Invigilators has been highly praising of student conduct and attitude and despite the number of shaking hands on entry – due to the nerves, not the temperature in the Exam Hall - the students report feeling very positive about the experience so far. Good luck to Year 11 for the remainder of their Mocks - we look forward to sharing in your success when you receive results early next term!

Principal: Justine Mason

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WESTCOUNTRY
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Post-16 Open Evening: A key driving force for our Year 11 students at this time of year is always the focus on their next steps and making plans for Post-16. To support students in this, our annual Post-16 Open Evening takes place live on Wednesday, 2nd December from 5.30pm on the Hele's School YouTube channel. Welcoming both our own Year 11 students, as well as a number from schools across the City, the event will look different this year in so much as it is a virtual evening rather than the usual on-site occasion. However, the same wealth of information will be available, as well as the opportunity to explore different subject areas, ask questions and generally get a feel for Sixth Form life at Hele's. The promotional video alone has made me want to return to the Sixth Form, so the evening itself looks set to be fantastic - we look forward to 'seeing' you there!

Uniform: You will recall my many pleas over recent years to ensure that your child comes to school in appropriate uniform. It is very important to us that students at Hele's wear their uniform with pride and the overwhelming majority of students do, but the school skirt remains a stubborn issue we have been unable to fully resolve to our satisfaction.

In September, with the support of Governors, we introduced the mandatory regulation school skirt for all Year 7 students and actively encouraged students in other years to purchase one too. Thank you for your support with this; students in Year 7 and beyond look exemplary in their knee-length, pleated skirts! That's absolutely not to say that others without the regulation skirt don't look well-presented, but we have a significant concern with the unacceptable length and style of skirts worn by an increasing number of other students. Therefore, **from September 2021, the regulation school skirt will be mandatory for all students in all year groups wishing to wear a skirt to school.** The reason for not moving to this sooner is that we want to support parents and carers during these challenging financial times, however, by giving such advance notice of this change now in readiness for September, anyone looking to purchase new uniform throughout the year can invest early in the school skirt - it could even provide a nice little stocking filler if you are stuck for ideas this Christmas!

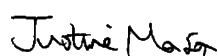
Details of the uniform can be found on the school website in the 'Parent Information' section, or an order form with a summary [here](#). Thank you in advance for your support of this move, which brings us in line with a number of other schools across the Westcountry Schools Trust and across Plymouth more generally. For those students for whom the school receives the Pupil Premium, their personal allowance can be used towards the school skirt in the same way as other uniform requests and for all parents/carers.

Good news: I was delighted to present certificates of commendation to Sixth Formers Will Dunford and Corey Pearce this week, after the boys finished joint first in the school on points in the annual Senior Mathematical Challenge. Open to entries from all UK schools, this 90-minute Maths challenge returned a flurry of success, with Team Hele's achieving five Silver Awards (top 20% finish of all students competing nationally) and 4 Bronze Awards (top 30% finish in the country). Warmest congratulations to Greg Robinson Samuel Partridge and Alex Rodd, who join Corey and Will with their Silver Award, and Joseph Hannon, Joseph Jenkins, Matt Ottley and Jack Vertessy who achieved a Bronze Award – fantastic achievements!

It's not just the students accomplishing remarkable things in difficult circumstances either, but staff are also tasting success through their hard work and endeavour! Warmest congratulations to Helena Williams (Resources Assistant) who this week was awarded a scholarship of £1000 from the University of Worcester in recognition of her exceptional first year of distance learning on the FDSC Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young people Foundations Science Degree. Well done, Helena, a wonderful role model in showing the importance of lifelong learning and a thoroughly deserved accolade!

Wishing you a restful weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason

Principal

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