

Hele's School

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



Friday, 4 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

There has been a flurry of activity this week in relation to government guidance and announcements impacting on schools; from the impact of moving out of a period of national lockdown to localised tiers of restrictions (Plymouth being Tier 2 of 3) to news that Ofsted have suspended their monitoring visits until after Easter, and through to perhaps the most rousing confirmation yet from the Secretary of State for Education that GCSE and A Level exams **will** happen in England in the summer and there will be a *'package of exceptional measures to improve fairness and prevent disruption'* - good news for our Year 11s and Year 13s in particular, who at long last have some certainty over their summer assessments, and good news for school in terms of providing flexibility with our delivery model of learning to ensure breadth of experience, careful and considered reintroduction of practical learning to some groups in some subjects, and quality first teaching in specialist classrooms and labs.

Changes for Term 3 (January 4th 2021 onwards): as I informed you last week, our Local Governing Body has discussed and agreed some important changes to the school day and organisation of learning for next term. There are two significant changes, which we are busily planning for:

1. **The timing of the school day will revert to a more familiar pattern for ALL children in ALL year groups with Tutor for all being in the morning:** 8.40am registration and Tutor period, five one-hour lessons interspersed with two 30-minute breaks for social time and eating, and a 3pm finish. We expect students to be on site at 8.30am, in readiness for formal learning from 8.40am. Of course, we will manage movement on and off site, but this will be within a much tighter window of time at the start and end of the day than is now.
2. **Teachers will be based (as far as possible) in their own classrooms from January, and it is students who will move for their learning across the school site** – albeit in a very controlled one-way system with tight control measures - to access their learning in specialist rooms. Strict seating plans will remain in place in every room, to enable accurate track and trace of close contacts should there be a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in the school community. Year groups will continue to have a designated egress point to access the school site and will continue to be based in their current year group bubble for all Tutor time and social times, with catering facilities and toilets allocated in each zone for designated year group use only.

Governors agreed when we reopened in September that we would have a formal review point in Term 2 and evolve the model accordingly for Term 3. We've watched the science carefully, as well as reflected on our own experiences 'on the ground'. In the 12 weeks that have passed this academic year, for example, we have seen PHE and DfE advice change markedly from needing to send a year group bubble home in September in response to a confirmed positive COVID-19 case, to half a year group a few weeks into term, to now being very forensic in interrogating seating plans in each room and having precise conversations with the child and their family (or the member of staff) to identify whom they may have had close contact with in social time or who they travelled to and from school with to ensure minimum number of people self-isolate as a precautionary measure. This shift allows us more flexibility in how learning is organised - going forward therefore and has enabled us to look at moving children around the site more

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readily and confidently. Please be assured that these changes have been and discussed with the Executive Leadership Team at the Westcountry Schools Trust and fellow Headteachers, drawing on the experiences and feedback of those WeST Secondary Schools who have already successfully implemented this model this term.

We have seven 'task and finish' groups of staff carefully planning specific areas of provision, including logistics of safe movement around the school buildings and site, reiterating control measures in place and devising new protocols, reviewing behaviour protocols and provision as well as SEND and Inclusion provision, to mention just a few.

Though the operational detail behind these changes is currently being finalised – and you can imagine there is much to consider and mitigate - I want to give you the earliest sight of what our delivery model will look like and to assure you that we continue to work to ever-changing advice and guidance from both the Department for Education and Public Health England to ensure we can offer a full curriculum experience whilst safeguarding our school community. Once we have carefully risk assessed and agreed these operational aspects, I will share a detailed plan with all parents and students.

Please be advised that I will alert our students to these changes in a virtual assembly next week so they too are kept informed of and supported through the change, but it would be helpful if you could discuss these changes with them in the interim.

End of Term 2 arrangements: confirmation that the end of term 2 is on Friday 18th December and students will have a slightly earlier end to the day - Years 7, 8, 10 and 13 will be dismissed at 1pm, with Years 9 and 11 (due to their later start to the school day than the other year groups at present) dismissed at 1.15pm. Lessons will continue as normal before Break 1, but we will then have an extended Tutor period so we can go through the January plans and routines with all children and we can walk through the site to familiarise everyone with the one-way systems and control measures/protocols to ensure they are confident about the start of the next term.

Our annual support of Christmas Jumper day to raise money for the Save the Children charity will take place on the last day to bring some festive cheer before we all head off for a much-needed Christmas break. Children and staff can wear 'mufti' for the day for a donation of £1 to charity and we are encouraging everyone to wear something suitable for the occasion – please note, that this *does not* have to be a Christmas jumper, so please do not feel pressured in any way to source such a thing if your child doesn't own one! A simple smile and showing the spirit of Christmas through kind, thoughtful and compassionate actions will suffice! Likewise, your child can still wear mufti even if you are not in a position to contribute £1, so please do not worry.

Start of Term 3 arrangements: all lessons for all year groups will start on Monday 4th January and in accordance with each child's timetable. However, some year groups will be working remotely from home for the first day or two to enable a carefully planned and considered build up to once again having 1300 young people on the corridors. It has been 8 months after all since any staff or student has experienced this, and Year 7 have never experienced it at all of course! It is important to stress that *no learning time will be lost for any child as part of this induction process*, but we feel it is a sensible and necessary step to take to facilitate a safe return to the new model of delivery. The arrangements for each year group are below:

- **Monday 4th January: Years 7 and 8 onsite** (Years 9 – 13 will have live lessons via MS Teams remotely, in accordance with their usual timetable)
- **Tuesday 5th January: Years 9, 10 and 12 will join Years 7, 8 onsite** (Years 11 and 13 will have live lessons via MS Teams remotely, in accordance with their usual timetable)
- **Wednesday 6th January: All year groups on site**

Winter Grant Scheme (WGS): more information has been shared with Local Authorities about the government's scheme to offer support to 'vulnerable' families this winter. Plymouth City Council have confirmed that over the course of the next 10 days they will issue eligible families an e-voucher to the value of £30 to help towards food and bills, and schools will be asked to distribute those e-vouchers to families in receipt of Free School Meals before the

Christmas break. Please, if you are not in receipt of Free School Meals but feel you will struggle to provide food over the holiday, do get in touch with your child's Head of Year to ask for support. There is a possibility that we could secure an e-voucher for you through the WGS providing you meet the government's definition of 'vulnerable families', or we can certainly make a confidential referral to a food bank for you. Do not struggle alone – there is help available.

Good news: it is tradition at Hele's that the privilege of decorating the school Christmas tree is always afforded to a few Year 7 students, nominated by staff for their exceptional commitment to learning since joining the school. Of course, there are many, many worthy students – and let me say that this year's Year 7s are exceptional in so many ways – but alas, only 3 could be put forward this year. Thank you to Rosie Bridgett 7B, Lily Sacker 7B and Ethan Traynor 7C for doing a sterling job of the decorating, and congratulations on your nomination.

I was thrilled and proud in equal measure this week to hear of the endeavours of Jacob Nicholls in 7E to raise money for the food bank, after he proclaimed that he had been thinking about Christmas and hated to think that there will be families who may struggle to buy food. Of his own volition, Jacob completed a 10-hour sponsored silence at the weekend. He has smashed the £50 target he set himself and has so far raised nearly £250! I'm sure you will agree that this is a fantastic effort on Jacob's part and demonstrates the true spirit of Christmas. Well done, Jacob, you're a shining example to us all!

Wishing you a restful weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal

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