

Hele's School

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



Friday, 11 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Given today is the last Friday of this term, I write my final parent/carer update with a sense of bewilderment of how time has flown by coupled with a (slightly panicked) realisation that 2 weeks today is Christmas Day and there is so much to organise! Just four school days remain, yet there is much to pack into them.

Bicycle maintenance: we are pleased to announce a fully socially distanced 'Dr Bike day' at Hele's School on Wednesday 16th December to make sure that our students have a roadworthy bike. Ryan Evans, Sustrans Bike It Plus Officer Plymouth, will be at school all day to undertake safety checks, basic servicing and minor repairs on bikes. If there are any major repairs that need doing, a note will be attached to the bike so you can take it to a bike shop for repair and tell them exactly what needs doing – this saves time and money! All bikes must be cleaned and disinfected before and after any work is done, which means there is a limited number that can be seen on the day and so bookings *must* be made in advance. All bikes *must* have the owners' name clearly marked (on a sticker or a label), as well as a contact email address – no work can be completed without this, I'm afraid. If you would like to take advantage of this free service, please **respond by email to this InTouch message by Monday 14th December at 3pm**. Services will be allocated on a first come, first served basis and we will confirm by email on Tuesday 15th December whether your request has been successful.

Christmas mufti day: although the earlier than anticipated end of term put pay to our original plans for Christmas mufti, we would still like to give students the opportunity to support the Save the Children charity and therefore, Christmas jumper/mufti day will now be on Thursday, 17 December. A £1 donation is encouraged please. Last mufti day we raised over £1000 for charity, so it would be great to keep the spirit of generosity going to help others less fortunate than ourselves. Your child can still wear mufti even if you are not able to contribute £1, so please do not worry.

Staffing update: It is with a heavy heart but a sense of excitement for what lies ahead for our colleagues, that we say a fond farewell to the following staff:

- In his capacity as Deputy Head of History, Andy Burkey has been a strong advocate for young people throughout his 18 years at Hele's School, working tirelessly and successfully with so many children to instil a passion for History. His impressive array of ties on a variety of historical themes will certainly be missed in the staff room and corridors! We wish Andy the very best for the future as he retires from the teaching profession.
- A leading light in the CCF where she heads up the RN Section, and a great teacher of Geography with a strong commitment to fieldwork, Lara Miller has decided to take some time out of the teaching profession to pursue her ambition to work in another Public Service - the Police. I've no doubt Lara will embrace this new direction and excel in this field, and we wish her well.
- Heather Palmer, Learning Support Assistant, is relocating to Northamptonshire to be nearer to her two granddaughters. Heather has been incredibly supportive of our young people with Special Educational Needs

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throughout her brief time at Hele's and worked sensitively and constructively alongside children to remove barriers to learning wherever possible. We wish her much love and happiness.

Our sincere thanks to our colleagues for all they have done for our children and school, and our very best wishes for their future endeavours. We have recruited to each of these posts and I will write next term to introduce you to those staff joining Team Hele's.

End of term 2/start of term 3 arrangements: As confirmed last week, all 22 Secondary and Primary schools in the Westcountry Schools Trust will now be closed to all students on Friday 18th December 2020. Staff have a remote training day on this day. The last teaching day of this term then is Thursday 17th December 2020, and Hele's School will be open for the full day.

The Spring Term will commence on Monday 4th January for all students, with some year groups working remotely at home in accordance with their usual timetable, as communicated last week, to allow a careful and safe induction to the changing model of delivery of learning from January. A reminder of those arrangements can be found in the table below:

Year group	Onsite from	Entry point	Start time	End time	Tutor & Social Time Zone	Head of Year	Pastoral Support Manager	Pastoral Improvement Partner (PIP)	Senior Leader 'Bubble' Link
7	Mon. 4 th Jan. '21	West gate (<i>note switch from East gate being used currently</i>), Seymour Road	8.40am	3.00pm	Maths block and ramp/car park area (no cars)	Mrs Crosley	Mrs Keen	Mrs Crawford	Mrs Crawford
8	Mon. 4 th Jan. '21	Plymbridge Road gate	8.40am	3.00pm	Science block and Main Hall	Mrs Skingle	Mrs Parker	Mrs Crawford	Mr Fonseca
9	Tues. 5 th Jan. '21	Plymbridge Road gate	8.40am	3.00pm	English, top playground & Piazza	Miss Prifti	Mrs Adamson	Ms Clapham	Mrs Ayres
10	Tues. 5 th Jan. '21	West gate, Seymour Road	8.40am	3.00pm	West Quad classrooms and front play area	Mrs Aldersley	Miss Glasspoole	Ms Clapham	Mrs Pomfret
11	Weds. 6 th Jan. '21	East gate, Seymour Road (Stonebarton end)	8.40am	3.00pm	East Quad classrooms & middle play area	Mr Carwardine	Mrs Watts	Ms Clapham	Ms Clapham
12	Tues. 5 th Jan. '21	Trelawney Road gate (side entrance)	8.40am	3.00pm	P16 Block for Tutor/Study & P16 upstairs for social time	Mrs Curtis		Mr Stone	Mr Stone
13	Weds. 6 th Jan. '21	Trelawney Road gate (side entrance)	8.40am	3.00pm	Library for Tutor/Study & P16 downstairs for social time	Mrs Curtis		Mr Stone	Mr Stone

Please do keep an eye on our website over the coming week, as we will develop a 'one stop shop' where we will post reminders of the January plans should you want to double check arrangements before the start of Term 3. You will be sent a link to this area of the website next week via InTouch. Students will be walked through the new routines and the new one-way system for travelling safely around the school site on Thursday, so as to remove any anxieties they may have in readiness for January and to answer any of their questions.

Reporting positive COVID-19 test results cases for any students after Thursday, 17 December 2020: I honestly hope that every member of our school community and their family has a happy and a healthy Christmas break and we all get the down time we all crave after what has been an exceptionally busy and challenging term. However, Public Health England and the Department of Education have requested that school leaders continue to support the NHS Test and Trace for a further six days after the last day in school (i.e. up to and including Wednesday 23rd December in our case at Hele's).

Please may I therefore ask **parents/carers to report positive cases up to and including Wednesday 23 December via the dedicated online contact form on the Hele's School website under the 'Contact Us' section.** This will then be followed up with a phone call from either myself or one of the Deputy Principals, Mrs Pomfret or Mrs Crawford, during the Christmas period. We will check on the health and wellbeing of your child and determine whether we need to contact families to advise their child self-isolates as a precaution if they have been identified as having close contact with your child.

It is important to note that *all other forms of communication into the school will be closed during this holiday period*; please do not leave a voicemail on the absence line or Reception switchboard and do not email Hele's School as these accounts will not be checked whilst school remains closed and important information will not be picked up in a timely fashion.

Protecting each other: Whilst we actively encourage and reward good attendance, **I cannot stress enough that children should not attend school if they are feeling unwell in any way next week, and especially if they are displaying one or more of the COVID-19 symptoms:** a high temperature, a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours - or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

In the event of a confirmed positive COVID case where the child or adult has been in school the 48 hours prior to becoming symptomatic (or the date a COVID test was taken if asymptomatic), School is obliged to inform families where there may have been close contact. The last thing I would want to do is scupper plans for the Christmas period by tracing and advising children that they need to self-isolate for up to 14 days due to being in close contact with a positive case. I can imagine how devastating this may be for families, but we will be obliged to follow DfE advice in the interests of public health.

With that in mind, please continue to be extremely vigilant regarding your child's health next week and do not take any chances - if they are unwell, please do not send them to school.

Parent Voice: thank you to the 21 parents/carers who took part in the in-depth telephone interviews conducted over the past fortnight. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and common themes emerging included:

- Confidence in school's ability to manage through COVID
- Effective and timely communication from school
- Total understanding of control measures in place (parents and children)
- Strong curriculum offer - in and out of the classroom
- Effective pastoral support & good support for mental health & well being
- Overwhelming positive response about their child's enjoyment of school and feeling safe
- Calm and orderly culture meaning good learning and progress has continued since September
- Overwhelming recognition and thanks for hard work from staff to keep school open and provide for students who are self-isolating

In terms of improvements, suggestions included:

- Soften the restrictions and open the whole site to all year groups for lessons
- More practicals
- Extra-curricular clubs to be reinstated, and keep on with CCF & Duke of Edinburgh
- Ability to order hot food online
- Move Tutor time to all years to the morning
- Use MS Teams OR ClassCharts to post work, not both
- Open the Library to all year groups
- Hold virtual Parents' Evenings

Many of these improvements will be addressed next term through changing our delivery model of learning (such as greater movement around the school for lessons, morning Tutor time for all). Please be assured that we are working hard to reintroduce practical learning (prioritising exam groups and then looking to roll out to other years) with robust subject risk assessments to ensure these can be done in a controlled and COVID-secure way.

Likewise, with extra-curricular provision - the Learn and Grow sessions, Study Café, Duke of Edinburgh, Ten Tors and Drama Club will all continue next term, and we will use the success of these extra-curricular activities to extend our offer wherever we can, so do watch this space. Parents' Evenings will be done remotely via MS Teams where already calendared, and we will endeavour to make some spaces and facilities readily available where possible (such as widening Library access or exploring the feasibility of online ordering of food).

We acknowledge the MS Teams versus ClassCharts dichotomy and continue to work hard to find a solution to this - it's tricky, as both platforms specialise in different services and we don't want to dilute either, but we won't give up! Please do keep your feedback coming; it's important to us that your experiences 'on the ground as an end user' are shared, and we are always keen to hear ideas to make provision even better.

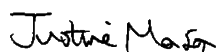
Good news: it was an absolute pleasure and privilege to conduct a mock interview this morning with Joseph Hannon (Year 13 and Head Boy), who has secured not one but TWO interviews at Oxford University next week - one to read Maths and one to read Philosophy. We are all so proud of Joe and wish him the very best of luck for what will undoubtedly be a gruelling process - I have every confidence that he will shine, whatever the final outcome!

I was so pleased this week to receive official notification that every single Year 11 Leaver from Hele's this summer has continued into further education, training or an Apprenticeship and sustained that provision. To have confirmation of the 100% destination data makes me incredibly proud, as this is an exceptional key performance indicator; a strong endorsement of the resilience of a fantastic cohort of young people who have succeeded despite a hugely disrupted final year due to Coronavirus, and to the strength of Careers Support and Guidance provided by Mrs Yeomans, Mr Stone and the wider team to ensure strong progression for Hele's graduates. Well done to all!

And finally: as the Christmas countdown begins, on behalf of everyone at Hele's School may I pass on my very best wishes for the festive season and thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to welcoming students back to school in 2021, with all the hope and optimism that the New Year promises - I'm sure we'll all be glad to see the back of 2020!

Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones and here's to brighter days ahead.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal

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