

Hele's School

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



Friday, 22 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we reach the mid-point of this term, you will see from the length of this update that school remains as busy as ever, even though the building itself is very empty!

Homework: we are conscious of the increase in screen time that remote working creates and the intensity of demands made on all parties. In light of the current situation and in response to feedback from parents, students and staff, we are suspending our homework policy for the period of lockdown - all learning is "homework" at the moment and we need to limit the screen time for students. We also want students to prioritise keeping up with the content covered in lessons. Instead our arrangements will be:

- Years 7 - 10 will not be set compulsory homework, but subject teachers may set optional tasks for those who need to practise more or wish to extend their knowledge and understanding further.
- Years 11 and 13 will be set tasks related to their fortnightly assessments to ensure they are fully prepared and can perform to their absolute best in their ongoing assessments.
- Year 12 will be set homework to prepare for lessons or to complete work set, but we will seek to limit their screen time to no more than 5 hours per day.

For students and families who would prefer their routine to include some homework and feel able to cope with the extra demands, we would advise the following:

- Go back over the lessons of the day to check understanding or complete any unfinished work.
- Review and improve assessments/assignments using the feedback you have been given.
- Complete any optional homework set by class teachers.
- Use one of the 5 core strategies to review your Knowledge Organisers for Terms 1-3.
- Read a book or an article.

These are the habits of the most effective, self-regulated learners because they identify gaps in their own learning and seek to fill them before they move on. This is a really helpful way to increase your confidence and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Attendance and engagement: we continue to be pleased and impressed in equal measure by the very high levels of attendance and engagement in remote learning that we are seeing from all year groups - thank you for your support in getting children into good routines. We've had to find a different way to provide the support we would usually do in school, and one of the ways we're doing this is through tracking student engagement by taking a register each lesson and following up on non-attendance with contact home to alert parents/carers and to explore any barriers on an individual basis. Whether related to technical issues or if it's a sign that a student is really struggling and needs some support, we have wonderful teams of Pastoral staff and SEND staff who can help overcome any difficulties you may be experiencing to ensure attendance and engagement improve or is sustained. You will shortly receive a letter from your child's Head of Year and Pastoral Support Manager to signpost the help available and how to access that support.

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Remember, we are in this together and there is plenty of help should you or your child need it, so please do contact us if you need anything.

ClassCharts Achievement & Behaviour Points: in order to provide more accurate details of your child’s successes and areas for development, we have made some changes to the categories for achievement and behaviour points on ClassCharts. From Monday 25th January, the categories will reflect our current ‘virtual’ school far better and provide parents/carers with key information around engagement in online lessons, submission of work and assessments. We hope this will provide a quick and easy overview of how your child is performing in terms of remote learning. For parents/carers of those students in exam years 11 and 13, this will be strengthened with email communication specific to any concerns.

We are acutely aware that for some students, the temptation to seek online support with work or assessments is huge, however, submission of work that isn’t the student’s own is always very obvious and means teachers cannot assess a student’s performance or help them to improve. For this reason, we have included a category for ‘plagiarism’ to keep you informed if this applies to your child. We will then look to support them with developing the confidence to submit their own work.

Given the nature of remote teaching and learning, teachers will not always get this right so if you feel a point has been given to your child unduly, please make contact with us through your child’s tutor. If there are extenuating circumstances, points can easily be removed but the purpose of the system is to support parents/carers to understand how your child is engaging with remote learning beyond simply logging on. As always, your feedback is greatly welcomed.

Commitment To Learning: we have adapted our Commitment To Learning (C2L) criteria to reflect that students working from home during Term 3:

	Excellent	Good	Inconsistent	Unsatisfactory
Quality of work	I always produce my best work. I seek feedback on my learning and act upon it. I show commitment to improving by redrafting/repeating work and completing additional tasks in my own time.	I always produce my best work. When given feedback, I act upon it and am keen to improve my work.	I produce my best work when I am interested in a topic or subject but do not do this consistently. I can produce better work with more effort. I do not always act upon the feedback given.	I give up easily and do not always complete tasks set. I could produce better work with more effort. I do not act upon the feedback given.
Independent Learning	I always complete remote learning to the best standard I can. I improve my learning by regularly reviewing my work. I am self-motivated and act on feedback to improve. I am confident to ask for help when I need it.	I try to complete remote learning to a good standard and submit all my work on time. I improve my work but would benefit from adopting new strategies to help. I contact my teachers when I need help.	My remote learning often meets the minimum expectations but sometimes deadlines are missed. I can produce better work with more effort. I do not contact my teachers for help.	My remote learning is not completed satisfactorily, and I often miss deadlines. I do not contact my teachers for help.
Behaviour	I am always committed, respectful and safe in my remote learning. I follow instructions but also show initiative. I know how to study effectively and take pride in my learning. I have strategies to cope when things may not go to plan.	I am always committed, respectful and safe in my remote learning. I follow instructions. I am developing my knowledge of how to study effectively and take pride in my learning. I have some strategies to cope when things may not go to plan.	I am not always committed, respectful and safe in my remote learning. I follow instructions but sometimes need reminders. I may sometimes be warned in lessons. I understand how to study effectively but need to practise more. I can find it difficult if things do not go to plan.	I am not committed, respectful and safe in my remote learning. I do not follow instructions and need frequent reminders. I do not take pride in my work and switch off when things do not go to plan.

All students were asked to set a remote learning target after receiving their IA1 earlier this month, and we will review this in the next few weeks, prior to their IA2 opening on Mon 8th February. The C2L grade given by teachers at IA2 will reflect a student's engagement with remote learning.

There is a clear link between strong educational performance and good or excellent commitment to learning, so anything we can do to help students' improve their C2L is time well spent. Parents are asked to please find an opportunity to discuss these criteria with their child/ren over the next few days.

Laptops: thanks to a fantastic effort from our IT Technicians and Reception staff, we have been able to loan over 150 laptops to support students' online learning. Our aim is to ensure that all of our students have access to a device which allows them to access live lessons and complete work. If your child does not have individual access to a device, please complete this form and we will arrange for one to be issued to them: [IT Device Access Survey](#).

Split Screens for Lessons: we know that some students find it difficult to switch between the on-screen lesson and their classwork during lesson time. However, the shortcuts below will help overcome this issue by splitting their screen in half so the lesson and accompanying work can then be viewed simultaneously:

- **If you use a Chromebook:** Simply press **Alt [** to split to the left or **Alt]** to split to the right. Then pull your other tab to the empty side.
- **If you use a Windows device:** Simply press **Windows key and the left arrow** to split to the left or **Windows Key and the right arrow** to split to the right. Then pull your other window to the empty side.

IT Helpdesk: when contacting ithelpdesk@heles.plymouth.sch.uk please try to include as much information about your enquiry as possible. For example: device being used (laptop/tablet/phone); version of MS Teams being used (desktop/web/mobile app); any error messages, etc. The more information we are given, the easier and sooner we can resolve issues and get you back online and learning.

Examinations: you may have seen last Friday late afternoon that Ofqual published a consultation on GCSE and A Level grade awarding for summer 2021. The consultation ends on Friday 29th January at 23:45. Whilst we will keep families fully informed on the outcomes of this consultation, I do appreciate that many families (whether with children in exam year groups or not) will be anxious about what lies ahead and may wish to get a steer from the consultation, or indeed contribute to it. A very good and succinct summary of the key proposals (2 sides) can be found [here at schoolsweek.co.uk](#). Should you want the full document (46 pages) then it can be found here: [Ofqual consultation](#).

Lateral Flow Testing: Government guidance for using Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) in school with students and staff continues to change regularly, with significant changes just this week regarding staff testing and serial testing. To summarise, consenting staff are now to be tested on-site twice a week, all children with parent/carer consent will be tested twice in their first week back on-site, whenever that may be (called 'mass testing'), and any close contacts of a positive case will need to continue to self-isolate at home for 10 days, as has been the case throughout - the proposed 'serial testing' of close contacts (daily tests for 7 days) has been suspended by Government Ministers, pending the call from school leaders for a stronger evidence base that serial testing rather than self-isolation is effective in breaking the chain of transmission. Staff testing at Hele's started this week.

I will write with more detail of mass testing when we are clearer on school return dates for children, but in the meantime please be assured the system we have devised for quick and safe administering of tests is robust and working effectively.

COVID-19 reporting of cases: although the majority of our students are learning from home at the moment, school retains responsibility for monitoring cases of COVID-19. Please continue to keep us informed via the COVID-19 reporting form on the school website in the 'contact us' section, also accessible via this link: [COVID-19 report form](#).

If your child is attending Supervised Remote Learning on-site, **you must not send them into school if they or any member of your household, support bubble or childcare bubble has any COVID-19 symptoms.** We appreciate your ongoing support with this.

Services Families: we have been contacted by the MOD Family Support Team asking us to pass on to our Armed Forces families a reminder that they are still available for any support required by families at this time. They were also keen for us to share with you a fantastic new arrangement they have with Plymouth Scrap Store. In short, they have been given a large amount of goodie bags filled with lots of materials that can be used for arts and crafts within the home. This has been funded by the Armed Forces Covenant. If you would like some of these bags then please contact school and we will arrange for this. As this has been funded by the Armed Forces, this particular provision is to be used *only for Service families within Plymouth.*

If you require any in-school support directly related to issues related to Services Personnel within the family, please contact Emma Clapham (Assistant Principal) clapham@heles.plymouth.sch.uk

Support for physical and emotional health and wellbeing: our School Nurse team has sent a timely reminder of support services available for young people throughout lockdown, which are summarised below.


- Livewell School Nursing Service: confidential help and advice for young people aged 11-19 and their parents/carers:
 - Phone: 01752 434008
 - Text chat: Parents service 07480 635189 or Young Peoples service 07480 63519.
- KOOTH provides access to support, information and guidance for young people through the online counselling service and online forums at: <https://www.kooth.com>
- Every Mind Matters gives you simple and practical advice to get a healthier mind and get more out of life – from how to deal with stress and anxiety, to boosting our mood or sleeping better: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>
- CAMHS: The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in Plymouth has a telephone advice line open 24/7 for those who are worried about a child or young person experiencing emotional or psychological distress. This service is open to Children, Young People, Parents, Carers and Professionals. The Urgent Mental Health Support Telephone line is open now 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for advice and support on: 01752 435122

Please contact your child's Pastoral Support Manager should you need help in accessing any of these services.

Finally: this week, we hosted a live, remote seminar as part of Holocaust Memorial Day with guest speakers Dr Noemie Lopian, daughter of Holocaust survivors, and Derek Niemann, the grandson of an SS Officer. My sincere thanks to Derek and Noemie for sharing their stories so openly and generously with the 141 students and staff who attended the seminar, and to Miss Pike, Head of RS, for arranging this powerful event as a reminder and warning of the perils of extremism.

As you can see, there is a lot going on and I do hope these weekly updates continue to provide you with useful and relevant information. Despite the constraints on what we can all do currently, I wish you a lovely weekend and hope you manage some rest and relaxation.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason
Principal

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