

Hele's School

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



Friday, 5 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I don't know about you but this week has felt like one long rainy day with the miserable, grey days all merging into one. However, it's Friday, the sun has come out for us and it looks like we have a bright weekend ahead, with the end of term on the horizon too, so there is much to be upbeat about!

Virtual School feedback: thank you to the 400+ parents/carers who completed our Remote Learning Feedback Survey last week. We were delighted to see that 95% of families felt that our remote learning provision had improved significantly from the first national lockdown, with another 4% unable to comment because they had joined the school since last March and felt they didn't have anything to benchmark against. Your confident response and positive comments show our hard work is paying off, and that is thanks to your constructive feedback along the way as much as the hard work of our staff and students - thank you. As you know, however, we are not complacent and want our students to have an exceptional offer.

We have collected student feedback from all year groups too, and again we are pleased with the very high completion rate and precise and helpful feedback about how we can make the provision even better. Some key themes emerging include: - reduce the screen time and teachers to slow the pace down and allow more time for processing and completion of work, and use the chat function more to post video links or paste instructions in the chat when moving a presentation on. We're listening and we are already thinking about how we can do these things to make the learning experience better. There are some things we are unable to influence – the strength and speed of WiFi signal, for instance, which we've found to be a frustration for many families in the Plympton area in particular – but blending learning to reduce the amount of screen time will help to minimise this issue too. More to follow on plans for post-half term.

Virtual events: It was wonderful to be able to connect online with our Year 11s and families on Wednesday at our Subject Teacher evening. The attendance was the highest we've ever had at any face-to-face subject evening for this year group, which suggests that for many families this may be a preferred model of delivery to consider long after restrictions are lifted! We will keep this under review, of course, but there certainly seems to be some mileage in offering an onsite or virtual meeting, post-COVID 19.

A reminder that there is an extensive range of opportunities being showcased at the Virtual Careers Fair via the Hele's School website – well worth a look, if you haven't already dipped in! Details on how to log in to the Virtual Careers Fair were emailed to parents/carers and to students at the start of this week. Any problems with accessing the fair, or any questions you have about the opportunities available, then please contact Mrs Yeomans, Careers Manager, at yeomans@heles.plymouth.sch.uk, who will be only too pleased to help you.

The Virtual Options Evening will take place online on Tuesday 9th February for all Y8 students. Again, details have been sent separately to all parents/carers this week, and students have had an assembly to kickstart the process just this morning. Any questions about Year 8 Options, or indeed the curriculum for any year group, please contact Mrs Ayres, Assistant Principal, at ayres@heles.plymouth.sch.uk.

Principal: Justine Mason

Seymour Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4LT

Telephone: 01752 337193 Fax: 01752 331460

email: heles.school@plymouth.gov.uk website: www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk

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Free data allowance for mobile phone users: The government recently announced a scheme which temporarily increases data allowances for mobile phone users on [certain networks](#). This will allow other devices (laptop, tablet, etc.) to connect to the internet via a mobile phone so children and young people can access remote education if their face-to-face education is disrupted.

This scheme is open to children and young people in Years 3 to 11 who:

- do not have access to a [fixed broadband connection](#) (the request may be unsuccessful if the account holder also has broadband)
- cannot afford the additional data needed to access educational resources
- have access to a mobile device that uses a participating network
- are facing disruption to their face-to-face education

If you feel that this scheme may be of use, please complete [this short form](#) and we will process your request. Unfortunately, you cannot apply directly to your network provider, but we will be pleased to apply on your behalf if you are eligible.

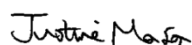
End of term and WeST training day: a reminder that term 3 ends next Friday, 12th February at 3pm. There is a calendared Trust-wide remote staff training day on Monday 22nd February, and hence there will be no remote provision on this day, either onsite at our Supervised Remote Learning provision for Key Worker and Vulnerable children, or for children learning at home. Term 4 begins for all children on Tuesday 23rd February, and our onsite Supervised Remote Learning provision will begin again on that day.

Good news: Despite the cancellation of GCSE and A Level exams for this summer and the ongoing uncertainty as to how grades will be awarded, Year 11 and Year 13 students continue to work incredibly hard, both in lessons and beyond! One clear indication of this is the Year 11 cohort this week surpassing the 2,500 mark for podcasts watched using online resource, GCSEPod, launched with them at the start of this term. Currently used predominantly for Science, students are sent three short podcasts daily to aid their Biology, Physics and Chemistry revision. A huge concerted effort means 90% of the Year 11 cohort are now engaged in this proven revision resources, which is to be commended. Leading the way are Year 11 students Amber Lord, Lewis Simpson and Tabitha Dilworth, racking up close to 400 pods between them - just phenomenal! Amber and Lewis have been justly rewarded for their efforts by being made GCSEPod Ambassadors, and both will now work with staff to roll the resource out across other subjects and to more students; a great example of student voice shaping our support for students!

Just one more week of home schooling left this term before we can all - students, parents/carers and staff alike - have a very well-deserved break - keep going, the finish line is in sight!

Wishing you all a restful weekend.

Kindest regards,



Justine Mason

Principal