



Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7am

Dear Parents,

### School closure

At 5.15pm yesterday evening the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, made a statement to the House of Commons regarding school closures as a national response to the developing Coronavirus situation. These school closures are designed to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

As a result and in line with government instructions, More House School will close at 4.30pm on this Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, until further notice. Our remote-education delivery, for all pupils, will commence in earnest from Monday morning, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, using the online systems already communicated to parents last Thursday, and accessible from the school website

<https://www.morehouseschool.co.uk/page/?title=Contingency+Planning&pid=221>.

It is expected that the closure of schools will continue into the Trinity (summer) term, until such a time as the government announces schools may be reopened.

### Exceptions

The government's instructions identify specific groups of children whom schools should continue to support on-site, should their parents wish them to attend. As such, from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, More House School will provide a facility for on-site care and educational support only for pupils who fall into one of the following categories:

- children where both parents, or the sole parent, are key-workers (such as NHS staff, members of the police force and school staff) – confirmation of those roles considered to qualify as key-workers is expected to be published by the Cabinet Office later today;
- OR
- children with an allocated social-worker;
- OR
- children who are the subject of an Education, Health and Care plan.

If your son is represented by one of the above three categories, he may continue to attend school until term finishes, at 12.30pm on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> March. However, such parents should make their own decision as to what is safe for their family, and whether they intend to send their child to school during this period of closure. Such decision-making by parents will take into account the government's explicit direction on social distancing and the prevention of the spread of disease, the significant reduction in public transport also recently announced, whether or not local authority-funded or arranged transport will continue to be provided, and bearing in mind the limitations on the educational provision possible in school during the closure, where the focus of school resources is on remote learning.

Later today I expect to contact parents, asking parents to inform the school, using a survey facility, whether their son falls into one of the above three categories and, if he does, whether they wish him to attend the school next week, or to remain at home during the period of closure.

## More House School

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Pupils who are eligible to attend, and whose parents choose for them so to do, will be subject to the usual timings of the school day, 8.30am to 4.20pm, but there will be no facility for after-school clubs for day boys. Only eligible boarders whose parents indicate their son will attend next week will have access to the boarding provision.

As of Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, those pupils who do attend school will be permitted to wear their home-clothes.

Please note that children who do not qualify within one of the above three categories are not permitted to attend school during the period of national school closure, in accordance with government direction.

### **Continuity of education**

Pupils at home during the period of closure will be expected to access the teaching through the online learning platforms developed by the school and by their teachers. As announced previously, lessons will be set online, according to your son's usual school timetable, and so he should expect to access six lessons daily, searching by year-group, academic-subject and class-teacher, in accordance with his school timetable (visible on the Parent Portal or in his homework diary). Pupils will, for many lessons, be asked to submit work to their teacher for assessment and feedback. This system is likely to develop over the school weeks ahead, and I am grateful for your support of your sons and their teachers, and forbearance with any teething problems. The week commencing Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, is a Week A (one).

Please note that teachers are not expected to set individual lessons during the Easter holiday period, although senior students are likely to receive additional guidance and support as necessary.

The setting of lessons through our remote learning platforms will resume, according to each pupil's individual school timetable, from Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Week B).

### **Public examinations and assessments**

Yesterday evening's announcement by the Education Secretary stated that no GCSE, BTEC or A level examinations will take place this summer. This is unprecedented and naturally causes concern for affected senior pupils and their parents. The Secretary of State acknowledged that a fair system for awarding such candidates qualifications and grades is necessary, but was unable to offer any detail during yesterday's business in the Commons chamber. We therefore expect, hopefully in the very near future, further guidance from the Department for Education and from Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation).

I urge students not to worry at this stage. All young people of their ages in the country are similarly affected, and it is incumbent upon the Department for Education to make arrangements to ensure such pupils are not disadvantaged. Higher education institutions will be understanding of the situation, and are likely to focus decisions on predicted grades. Further education providers will similarly need to be supportive of applicants. For those Year Elevens planning to continue their post-sixteen education in the Sixth Form at More House School, we are confident we know our boys and will be able to agree, with them and their families, appropriate programmes for September.

### **School events**

Arrangements will be made to conduct parent/teacher consultation meetings (scheduled parents' evenings and ad hoc meetings) remotely, and this is likely to include Year Eight and Year Nine Options-choices evenings, depending on the length of the closure period. It also seems likely that Sports Day will not take place this year, and even Founder's Day might prove impossible. Annual Review meetings are also, for the current period, suspended, although conference-call or Skype-style solutions are being considered.

All school trips are suspended, and we must work on the assumption that Activities Week planned trips will be cancelled. The school is currently investigating the financial implications, including the likelihood of reimbursement, and will contact all parents affected in due course. I ask, please, that you afford the school's staff the time to tackle these matters, which we are doing as quickly as possible. Please wait for further communication from the school rather than sending individual enquiries at this stage. The school's staffing is already significantly affected by the national situation, and we are working through matters as swiftly as we are able.

## **Holiday provision**

The Secretary of State's statement in the Commons also included a request that, where possible, schools consider remaining open during the Easter holidays to provide child-care for key-worker families only (other children must continue to practise social distancing by not attending shared environments such as schools). We are currently exploring our potential capabilities in this respect. If we find we have the resources to offer such a facility for eligible pupils, I will contact such parents in due course, seeking an indication of the possible level of interest.

## **Communication**

Whilst More House School will remain open to some extent throughout the enforced closure period in order to meet the need to support eligible families, the school continues to share a responsibility with all other employers to encourage, as much as possible, working from home. Our ability to respond to telephone calls is likely to be greatly reduced, and I therefore ask parents to use electronic communication as the primary means of communicating with the school during the period of national school closures.

## **Thank you**

I am very grateful to all parents for the overwhelming support the school's staff is receiving at this very challenging time. I am humbled by the lengths to which your sons' teachers have gone in preparation for the eventuality in which we now find ourselves, and by their commitment to providing the best possible care and sense of educational continuity to our pupils, and support of one another.

The situation remains fluid, and I expect much more information to come from the government through the course of today and tomorrow. I will keep you informed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.C. Hetherington', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Jonathan Hetherington BA (Hons) MSc (Ed) QTS  
Headmaster

