



Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents,

**Re: General update**

Following the fast-changing national guidance in respect of schools and children over New Year, and at the beginning of the week, life has now begun to settle, somewhat, into this new, temporary rhythm. The overwhelming messages of support and encouragement the school's staff has received from parents over the past seventy-two hours have been hugely appreciated, and demonstrate the collective commitment of our school community to keeping school families, pupils and school employees safe whilst ensuring every pupil receives the best possible education and support. Thank you.

**Start of term**

The new term opened on Wednesday morning, and prior to 8.30am we had little certainty about the numbers of pupils who may need access to the school site during this lockdown period. Nevertheless, we launched on Wednesday morning our remote-provision for all pupils off-site and on, and we also opened our on-site COVID-19 rapid-testing station.

Wednesday morning enabled the school's management team to assess the needs of our pupils and their families over the coming five weeks, and to design and implement a model for meeting all pupils' needs remotely, whilst simultaneously providing supervision for those pupils attending the site.

**Remote provision**

I am really encouraged that the very low numbers on-site, representing a little under 10% of our pupil roll, have made it possible for us to develop an on-site schedule of supervision which almost entirely comprises non-teaching and non-therapeutic staff. This enables our teachers and therapists to experience the minimum disruption to their core purpose of planning and delivering remote education, therapy and pastoral care to all of our pupils, ensuring that individual pupils' needs, including those identified within pupils' Education, Health and Care plans, are met through their live interaction with their normal teachers and therapists, and according to their normal school timetable.

**MORE HOUSE SCHOOL**

Moons Hill, Frensham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 3AP

T: 01252 792 303 E: [schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk) W: [www.morehouseschool.co.uk](http://www.morehouseschool.co.uk)

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Sustaining such continuity and trusted relationships between boys and their staff is so important, and promotes the health and safety of our pupils, their family-members and our school staff by negating the need for children to commute in shared and public transport for long periods daily during a national lockdown in order to access their academic and therapeutic provision.

Almost none of our teachers and therapists are attending the school site during the current lockdown, but are delivering all lessons and therapy sessions remotely. A very few staff are using their isolated classroom environment for remote-delivery due to lack of space, quiet or facilities at home. Many of our teaching and therapy staff are sustaining remote-delivery in tandem with caring for their own children at home. The very few pupils on-site are participating in the same remote on-line provision as everyone else, joining their classmates connecting from home.

All parents will have been conscious of the reports in the national press yesterday and this morning following the clarification from HM Government yesterday that the children of Critical Workers should, wherever possible, remain home and not attend school. Many schools have feared being swamped, and their staff felt threatened by the number of pupils in school and the inability to deliver simultaneously a meaningful remote education to others. I am grateful that our parent-body has shown such commitment, to use their child's exemption from the ban on school attendance only where it is absolutely essential in order for them to fulfil their essential duties as a critical worker.

The comprehensive nature of our remote provision, inclusive of direct Speech & Language Therapy, Literacy Intervention classes and Occupational Therapy sessions, matches pupils' normal timetable and class-groupings. It means that we are supporting pupils and their parents during national lockdown, in meeting the identified needs of their sons who fall under the government's 'Vulnerable' classification, without pupils' exposure to the risks of travelling to and from school using shared and public transport, or of meeting close together in the confines of our on-site therapy rooms. Again, parents' voices have been very strong in communicating their wish to avoid such risks for pupils and staff, welcoming the full access to such provision through our remote-delivery. I am delighted we are able to support our pupils fully – all of whom I recognise as experiencing vulnerabilities – in this manner.

Parents of pupils in the Junior Years, should expect to receive shortly a separate communication containing specific information from Mrs Turner, Head of Junior Years.

### **Testing station**

On Wednesday morning, thanks to our incredible team of school Registered Nurses, and reliant on the superb support of parent volunteers, we conducted ninety Lateral Flow COVID-19 rapid tests on-site, covering school workers who live on-site or who are expected to be working on-site frequently over the coming weeks, and those eligible pupils on-site. This was a fantastic achievement, and the result of an enormous planning exercise conducted in a very short time-frame. Photographs of our testing station, volunteers and some willing testing-subjects (I am not sure if I actually gave full consent for my thoroughly unflattering photograph to be publicised so widely!) were 'liked' on the school's social media channels by many in our community of More House families and followers. Thank you to all who contributed to make this possible.

### **Public examinations**

The government has now published confirmation that no public examinations will be sat during the summer 2021 series. The Department for Education has made a recommendation to the regulator, Ofqual, that school assessments of pupils be adopted as the means to realising final grades for accredited courses completing this summer. Unsurprisingly, the much debated 'algorithm' of last summer, originally intended to provide a national standardisation process and then scrapped after the publication of A Levels, is not recommended for deployment this summer. However, the detail on approaches to be used by schools in determining grades,

and the evidence admissible for providing justification, is unlikely to be confirmed for some time. It remains as important as ever that our Year Eleven and Sixth Form students continue to work as hard as possible at their academic and vocational courses.

Year Eleven pupils' parents will receive, very shortly, a communication from Mrs Kerr, Deputy Head (Curriculum) regarding the planning for mock-examinations, in the context of the current national lockdown.

### **General**

It is really important that pupils understand that their teachers and therapists remain committed to supporting them in every way possible during this lockdown time. I know that lessons and therapy sessions facilitated through our remote-provision will be engaging, challenging and fun, and will ensure our pupils continue to make appropriate academic, therapeutic and pastoral progress in spite of the national restrictions.

However, I also urge that such opportunities that are possible are used for supporting one another – classmates, teachers, pupils – socially. I hope that all of our pupils can feel, throughout this period, that their teachers and tutors continue to be very interested in them, in their achievements and in their hopes, in their pets and in their activities; in how they are coping. It is in these times that we feel most keenly the need for fellowship, and the strength of our closeness as a community.

Your son's form-tutor remains his primary support, and wants to know as soon as possible of any difficulties or worries, so that they can reassure and put in place support. All pupils are expected to attend all of their lessons, except in exceptional circumstances, and your son's teachers are monitoring his attendance and engagement in his sessions. We are keen to support any parents whose son may be struggling, at any point. Please continue to communicate with your son's tutor as normal.

I remain grateful for your support of one another and of the school's staff, and I wish you and your families good health and safety over the coming weeks. I pray that it will not be long before we can safely return to the school site, altogether.

Yours sincerely,

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

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