



Thursday 31st December 2020

Dear parents, employees and governors,

Re: Start of term arrangements

You will all be conscious of the announcements made yesterday evening by the Secretary of State for Education, and by the Prime Minister, specifically relating to school re-openings in January. This morning I have chaired a meeting of the school's senior leadership team and am now able to provide reassurance in respect of More House School's arrangements for next week onwards.

The government announcements of yesterday placed restrictions on certain age-groups of children attending school from the start of the January term, and included even tighter restrictions for some specific geographical areas of the country. More House School is now within a Tier 4 area. However, we are not within one of the Department for Education's currently-identified Contingency zones, and as a designated specialist school setting, we are afforded exemption from much of the latest restrictive measures announced.

This means that More House School will open in the same manner already communicated within my most recent letters to parents and employees, of the 18th and 22nd December respectively (available from the school's dedicated COVID-19 website page, at [More House School - COVID-19 & RAPID TESTING](#)).

Who is permitted to return to school?

Term will commence at 8.30am on Wednesday, 6th January 2021 for all pupils, in all year groups. All pupils should attend school on-site, unless they are the subject of a positive COVID-19 test result or display symptoms. Boarders are welcome to return to school from 6.30pm on Tuesday, 5th January, and employees are expected to return to work, on-site, as normal from Monday, 4th January, for our planned training and preparation days.

Those employees who have been contacted by the Department of Health and Social Care informing them that they are identified as being Clinically Extremely Vulnerable should not attend work in person except where specific plans have been made in communication with the school's Human Resources department. Such employees should already have received individual communication from the school.

Public and Mock Examinations

Some senior pupils are scheduled to sit BTEC examinations in the first week of term. The examinations board, Pearson, has confirmed these examinations will continue as planned. Those students should therefore expect to sit their examination in school as scheduled.

MORE HOUSE SCHOOL

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Year Eleven students' mock examinations were disrupted prior to the close of the Michaelmas term. Such pupils and their parents have already received communication before Christmas providing the 18th January as being the re-scheduled start of the remaining mock-exams. We still expect this plan to proceed, but will monitor the situation closely, since such arrangements rely upon sufficient staffing and resources in school, as well as Year Eleven pupil attendance.

Plans for on-site mass and rapid testing

My letters of the 18th and 22nd December provided details of our plans for providing initial mass testing for secondary-age pupils, weekly testing for employees, and seven-day serial testing for anyone identified as being in close contact with a confirmed positive case. These plans remain in place and we expect to receive our first consignment of lateral-flow tests on Monday, 4th January, in readiness for our first pupil mass-testing day, on Wednesday, 6th January.

The setting up and operation of our school rapid-testing station has been made possible only by the generous support of parents and members of employees' families, who have kindly volunteered to staff the testing station. On behalf of the school's governors and leadership team, I thank all those volunteers. If you intended to register your willingness to help, but have yet to do so, please use the online form accessible from [Rapid Testing Volunteer Registration Form \(office.com\)](#). Allocations of duties will be made when the school's administrative departments return to work, on Monday, 4th January, and volunteers will be contacted as soon as possible, giving as much notice as possible.

Thank you for your understanding and incredible support.

Consent and registration for rapid-testing

Thank you for your swift return of the consent forms for rapid-testing. We have now received back confirmed consent from the vast majority of forms sent out and this is extremely helpful in our administration duties. If you have yet to return your son's consent form, or your employee consent form, please do so as soon as possible, and in advance of the 4th January. To do so, please refer to a *DocuSign* email you will have received on the 23rd December.

There is a separate registration form which the government requires us to complete for each person engaging in on-site testing. An element of this form includes a declaration about symptoms experienced immediately prior to taking the test. We are in the process of establishing the most efficient means of completing those forms, and it is possible that elements of it which can be completed in advance of the testing day will be sent to you prior to Wednesday, 6th January. Again, I hugely appreciate your speedy response, and I apologise for yet another administrative task for parents and employees.

Learning arrangements

We anticipate pupils' learning to be less disrupted as we embark on the Lent term this January. The introduction of on-site, rapid-testing means that far fewer pupils and employees will find themselves required to isolate at home. Whilst the online, remote learning arrangements have been impressive through the challenge of the Michaelmas term and before the summer, the most effective lessons are those where all, or the vast majority of pupils are in the classroom, on-site.

However, the increase in on-site testing is likely to identify more a-symptomatic COVID-19 cases, necessitating associated isolation of those with a positive result. Further, now that the school is under Tier 4 restrictions, employees identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable are, in almost all cases, not able to attend the school site. The school's staff will continue to do everything possible to minimise the negative impacts on pupils' learning and progress, of staff and pupil absence over the weeks ahead, and we remain dependent on the mutual support and understanding of our pupil-parent body.

Reporting absence

Please remember that, should your son be unable to attend school for whatever reason, their parent must inform the school office by 8.30am on the day of absence, either by email at schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk, or by telephone on 01252 792 303, using the absence-reporting voicemail facility.

Finally

Thank you for reading through the above information – I apologise for another lengthy letter during the holidays, but I hope that you have found the information helpful to you and your family.

My colleagues and I remain hugely grateful for the strong support shown by our pupils' parents, and I look forward to welcoming our boys back next week for the start of an exciting term. I wish you and all in your families a very happy new year as we look forward to better times ahead.

Yours sincerely,

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

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