



Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents,

**Re: Wider reopening of schools from the 8<sup>th</sup> March**

In my last letter, of the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, I shared initial information regarding the welcome return of all pupils to schools, beginning on the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

I explained, briefly, the asymptomatic testing programme for school staff and for all pupils in Year Seven and above, and the need for a phased return to school during the week commencing on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Due to the nature of our school's catchment area; the considerable commuting distances of pupils, the shared transport arrangements, public transport arrangements and local authority-provided transport arrangements, and the large proportion of boarders, it is not feasible for the school to provide pupils with on-site testing appointments during the week before they are permitted to return to the classroom.

However, I communicated my commitment to ensuring the swiftest, safe return of all pupils and staff.

**Pupil and Parent Guide**

Please find, enclosed with this communication, a Pupil and Parent Guide to the March 2021 return to school. This follows the same format as the guide published in advance of September, and whilst many of our risk-mitigation measures remain consistent with then, there are several changes. I ask you to help your son to prepare for his return by helping him to read through and understand the information provided in that guide.

**Date my son returns**

This information can be found on pages 3 and 4 of the accompanying Pupil and Parent Guide. It also explains about arrangements for boarders' return. Please note that, until your son's allocated return date, he will continue to be taught online, in the same manner as currently, using our Microsoft Teams platform. Please also note the expected disruption to period one teaching, for all pupils, throughout the week of the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

**Pupils who were accessing on-site provision during lockdown**

Further to my letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, from the 8<sup>th</sup> March I ask parents of pupils who have been accessing on-site provision under the categories of vulnerability or as the dependent children of key-workers, to avoid sending their son to school before their allocated return date, wherever possible. This is to enable the school's staff to manage the testing of pupils, the supervision of pupils under controlled conditions until receiving their negative test, and the delivery of remote and on-site teaching.

**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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We recognise that in some family's circumstances, this request will be impossible to realise, and we will provide such staffing resource as is necessary to supervising individual pupils on-site additional to those allocated to have returned. We expect to contact relevant parents during the course of this week in order to establish definitive numbers. I am very grateful for your understanding and support of the school at this time.

### **Face-coverings**

Please refer to page 13 of the accompanying Pupil and Parent Guide.

Other than the mass testing programme, the most significant change in the government's directives for schools is that face-coverings should be worn in all indoor spaces where two-metre physical distancing of all people cannot be guaranteed. This means, that for the remaining weeks of the Lent term, all school staff and pupils are encouraged to wear face-coverings indoors, including during lesson-time.

I hope that this arrangement will be short-lived. However, the government acknowledges the concerns held by many children, parents and by school staff nationally, and identifies this measure as one which improves the safety and reassurance of all.

Junior Years boys, and some others, are technically exempt from having to wear face-coverings. However, it is understandable that the greater the number of children not wearing a face-covering, the higher the risk to others in our shared community, and the less-safe school staff and other pupils feel.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic many people have experienced heightened levels of anxiety, affecting their mental health and wellbeing. For this reason, I am asking that, wherever possible, all pupils – whatever their age – and all adults in school wear a face-covering whenever indoors. If your son is exempt from the requirement, I ask you to spend time considering this with him, in order to determine whether, for the remainder of the school term, he would be able to wear a face-covering in spite of his exemption, for the benefit of others who may share with him the same indoor space.

The government has provided instructions for preparing home-made face-coverings: [How to make a simple face-covering](#).

If wearing a face-covering is genuinely problematic for your son above what might be reasonable adjustment in support of others, please do not worry. He will continue to be supported as normal in school. Please support him to understand how important it is that he is as careful as possible in maintaining his distance from others, and in managing coughs and sneezes using his supply of clean tissues, followed by effective hand-hygiene. His teachers will also be keen to help him to practise these good habits.

In order to ensure your son is not subject to repeated questions from school staff, we will maintain a register of those pupils whose parents wish them to exercise their exemption from the requirement to wear a face-covering. Please register your son's exemption using the following link: [Exemption from wearing a face-covering in school](#).

More information on face-coverings, including exemptions for age, health or disability, can be found at: [Face coverings](#).

### **COVID-19 testing**

Please refer to page 2 of the accompanying Pupil and Parent Guide.

Pupils in the Junior Years are not currently eligible for asymptomatic Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing, and will return to school on the 8<sup>th</sup> March without testing.

All pupils in Year Seven and older are strongly encouraged to participate in the asymptomatic mass-testing programme, comprising three on-site LFD tests at the school's testing station, taken three to five days apart, and then home-testing twice-weekly.

For the vast majority of our pupils, parents have already an on-site testing consent, submitted to the school in readiness for our anticipated return to school in January. The school continues to hold that consent. For the very few we are missing, we are contacting individual parents.

**Registering for a testing account** (applicable to Year Seven or older only)

It will be an enormous help if you are able to support your son to set up his COVID-19 testing account in advance of his return to school. Please refer to the instructions on the attachment: 'Registering for a COVID-19 testing account'.

**What pupils need to wear and bring**

Please refer to page 5 of the Pupil and Parent Guide. Pupils are expected to wear their normal school uniform, or their P.E. kit on days when they have a timetabled P.E. lesson. However, it is understood that many pupils have not worn their uniform since December and are likely to have grown. Further, restrictions are likely to have made it difficult for parents to access our uniform supplier, Stevensons. Please be reassured that no pupil will be penalised for not being able to bring to school the correct uniform items if experiencing such difficulties.

**Absent staff**

A very small number of the school's staff are identified by the National Health Service as being Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, and remain under government instruction to shield until the next review date at the end of March. Therefore, a very few of our teaching, therapy or boarding staff will continue to work from home. Those who are teachers or therapists will continue to deliver live lessons to their classes in school, with in-school staff supervising and supporting as appropriate.

Likewise, any pupils instructed to isolate, or who are unable to attend school for a permissible reason, will be expected to engage with their normal timetable of lessons, joining each class using Microsoft Teams.

**Return to school**

I am delighted that by Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, we will have welcomed back to site every age-group, and that school life will feel a significant step closer to normality – such as is ever possible at More House. Our safe return depends on every individual – every pupil, student and adult – taking seriously our responsibilities to do the best we can in respecting and practising the measures in place to protect us all. I ask all parents, please, to support your son to prepare for his return to school, using the attached Guide.

On behalf of my colleagues, we remain dependent upon, and very grateful for, the continued encouragement and warm support of the parent body. Thank you, to you all.

I wish all of our pupils' families good health.

Yours sincerely,



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

Encl.:

- Return to School, March 2021; A guide for pupils and their parents
- Registering for a COVID-19 testing account

