



Monday, 20th April 2020

Dear Parents,

## Parents' Information Update

I hope that you and your families have managed to enjoy something of the warm weather and the Easter celebrations, despite the national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I also hope that our previous communications have reached you, and have been helpful. In particular:

- 20th March 2020, regarding the announcement of school closures, and how to apply for exemption from the national ban on attending school;
- 26th March 2020, providing an information update for all parents, and details of exceptional arrangements for the Trinity term's school fees;
- 3rd April 2020, regarding the remote learning parents' survey; and
- 6th April 2020, only sent to parents of pupils in Year Eleven, Year Thirteen and other Sixth Formers retaking a GCSE, regarding the Ofqual announcement in respect of awarding grades for accredited courses this summer.

If you have missed any of these communications, please check the school website, where some are published. For others, please seek help from [schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk).

## School community news

Following the announcement of school closures, the lack of personal protective equipment for those working in the NHS and in social care has been widely publicised. We are delighted to have been able to donate reusable eye-protecting goggles, gloves, elastic for the making of protective gowns, and manufacture and donate protective face shields, all for the NHS and other professionals on the front-line treating Covid-19 patients. For more information, please see the news stories on our website, at: <https://www.morehouseschool.co.uk/news/?pid=6&nid=1&storyid=2333>.

During the Easter break, we have been cheered by the news of new members of our More House School community.

Congratulations to R.E. teacher Joe Wright and his wife, Rebecca, on the birth of their daughter, Esmé Beatrice, born on the 29th March.

Congratulations to Science teacher Hardeep Kalsi and his wife, Lauren, on the birth of their son, Ezra Singh, born on Maundy Thursday.

Congratulations to English teacher Nick Renton and his wife, Tamsin, on the birth of their daughter Briar (Bree), born on Easter Day.

## More House School

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I hope to be able to share more good news from our Head of Drama and Year Nine, Emily Richards, very soon.

We are very pleased to welcome to the staff new colleagues, starting this term, including Anabel Flamank, our new Head of English and Georgina Barnes, a new Receptionist.

Whilst Mrs Richards is on maternity leave, experienced More House School teacher and Drama graduate, Miss Julia Collington, has been appointed as Teacher of Drama, and will be working with our other current Drama teachers, Miss Mimi Valentine and Mr Tom Kirkham.

In terms of covering Mrs Richards' Head of Year duties, I am delighted that Mrs Erin Easdown, an experienced tutor within the Year Nine pastoral team, assumes this position with effect from the start of this new term.

I am very grateful to longstanding and semi-retired More House teacher, Mrs Susan Impey, for the support she has given in teaching English and taking a Year Eight form-group since the Michaelmas half-term. Miss Collington has been supporting that form-group in the latter part of the Lent term, and takes over the form-group with effect from the start of the new term this week.

#### Pupils exempt from the ban on attending school

Since the school closed, we have continued to provide a supervision provision for those pupils who are eligible, under government-published criteria, for exemption from the ban on attending school – please refer for detail to my letter of the 20th March.

This has meant an extremely small number of children attending site daily, including through the holiday period, and I thank the members of the staff who have surrendered their holiday time to maintain this provision, especially during such a worrying time.

That provision on-site, consisting of supporting pupils to access the remote learning being provided to all pupils, will continue for the time being. If you believe that your child is eligible for exemption from the ban, and you have no ability to provide alternative care arrangements, you must register your request using the on-line form, to which my letter of the 20th March provided a link. If you have already submitted this form and your son is accepted as eligible, you need not do so again. However, for eligible families who now need to request their son attends school during the continued ban, please use the following link:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/T9KFDV8>.

Please note that during the period of closure, there is no school catering service, and pupils attending must provide their own packed-lunch and snacks. Please remember the school is a nut-free environment.

#### Remote Provision

Thank you to the large number of parents who kindly contributed responses to our Remote Learning parents' survey during the Easter holiday. That feedback has been hugely helpful in our process of evaluation of the resource provided during the last week of the Lent term – the first week of school closure – and our planning for further development.

In designing the approach for the next few weeks, we have sought to address the feedback provided by survey respondents and to realise an effective and sustainable programme which promotes direct engagement between teachers and pupils, accommodates the varying strains on individual families and on our teachers' and therapists' own family lives, increase the provision of direct therapeutic intervention, and maximise the opportunities for pastoral and extra-curricular support.

Pupils will experience more 'live' lessons, through video-conferencing, auditory and live-chat sessions. They will engage with school and year-group assemblies, and regular form-time. Please read through the accompanying letter from Mrs Kerr, Deputy Head (Curriculum), providing further detail.

There will be a whole-school assembly on the first morning of term, Wednesday 22nd April.

Mrs Hammond, Deputy Head (Wellbeing) and our designated lead for safeguarding, will issue to pupils a clearer set of guidelines for managing their remote learning sessions safely. Nevertheless, I would be grateful if you would reiterate to your sons the importance of their being clothed in appropriately modest, daytime clothes suitable for an online classroom environment – pyjamas or similarly extra-casual is not suitable.

Mrs Kerr's letter, enclosed with this communication, provides again the links to your son's year-group remote learning site, and describes where parents can access very easy-to-follow instructions for navigating the academic, therapeutic, extra-curricular and pastoral provision through Microsoft Teams and OneNote, informed by parents' feedback to our survey.

### School events

The government has advised that although schools may reopen to some pupils, even as early as the 11th May, social distancing measures are likely to be a part of our daily experience for much longer. Larger gatherings are expected to be banned for a longer period of time, and thus Sports Day and Founder's Day will not take place in their normal format. Sports Day may be postponed to the autumn.

We are exploring a variety of options in respect of Founder's Day, including the publishing of recorded speeches, the issuing of prizes and certificates remotely, and the possibility of an event in the autumn for those leaving the school this summer. Planning, even into the autumn term, though is difficult as we are advised to expect the continued application of social distancing measures for up to twelve months or more.

Parents of pupils in years Eight and Nine will receive information in the coming days explaining how the information and support for their sons' choosing of GCSE and BTEC non-core options subjects will be delivered.

### Examination and end-of-course results

Parents of relevant pupils received a letter from Mrs Kerr, Deputy Head (Curriculum) on the 6th April following the announcement from Ofqual in respect of how final grades for accredited courses will be awarded this summer. The important message is to remember that any pupil who disagrees with his final grade will be afforded the opportunity to sit the exams – probably in the autumn - he has been denied during this summer series. Pupils must therefore continue to prepare so that they have the genuine option to prove their worth should they feel it necessary.

In that letter of the 6th April, we communicated the government's initial thinking that final grades might be awarded a little earlier than usual – possibly even in July. Very recently Ofqual has released an update that confirms that there will be no such early release of final grades, and that the planned dates for the nation-wide publication of public-exam results this summer, in August, will remain in place. Therefore, A Level and Level 3 BTEC results will still be published on Thursday, 13th August, and GCSE and Level 2 BTEC results will still be published on Thursday, 13th August.

### Communicating with school

In accordance with the requirements issued by the government, the school is working to ensure as many of its staff can work remotely as possible. During term-time I expect there to be a single person each day in the main administrative and reception office. Please therefore use email ([schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk](mailto:schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk)) as the primary means of contact, rather than telephoning the main switchboard.

As ever, your son's form-tutor should be considered your first point of contact on any matter not purely administrative. Again, email contact is likely to be the most effective approach, but your son will have direct access to the 'Chat' function through their MS Teams account, both with their form-tutor and with their individual subject teachers.

### Our school

These are, indeed, extraordinary times, and they place a huge burden on every one of us as we are prevented from enjoying the normal social and professional contact on which we have come to rely. Nevertheless, this school community is founded not in bricks and mortar – or even log-cabins – but in the relationships between

people in our school. Your sons' teachers continue to be their teachers, and are excited about providing the best possible support to pupils and their families over the coming weeks. Similarly, our staff, whether working remotely whilst caring for their own families, or supervising those in school, need the support and encouragement that is such a strong and enduring characteristic of this unique school community.

On behalf of my colleagues, I thank our parent community for the flood of messages bearing encouragement and compliment, received since the announcement of school closures on the 18th March. Such communications are a real boost, and strengthen all the staff in such trying times.

I wish all our pupils and their families, and likewise our staff, the very best for the term ahead as we meet these challenges head-on, together, and I look forward to happier times when we can again come together to celebrate the talents of our fantastic pupils.

Please remember this school and its community of pupils, staff, governors and families, in your prayers.

Yours sincerely,

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