



Tuesday, 9th June 2020

Re: Arrangements for Lower Sixth (Year Twelve) pupils

Dear Lower Sixth parents,

On the 25th May, the Department for Education published guidance to settings about the phased reopening of schools and colleges. This included the recommendation that Year Six pupils be permitted to attend school sites from the 1st June, the expectation that Year Ten and Year Twelve students would receive increased provision from the 15th June such that they receive “some face-to-face support”, and the ambition that all primary years will be permitted to attend school sites for a month before the end of the school year.

Parents will be very aware that this is a fluid situation, and that it is reported in the national press this morning that a statement from the Secretary of State is expected this afternoon, announcing to MPs that plans for opening primary school access to other year groups beyond Reception, Year One and Year Six are now considered not safe, and will not be implemented this term.

In line with government guidance, we have been reviewing carefully all possible approaches to increasing support for Lower Sixth students from the 15th June in order to determine what model will afford our boys the most effective provision. Decision-making has been influenced by two primary considerations: safety and educational benefit.

My letter of the 26th May shared with you the link to the government’s guidance for schools. The premise for the safe return of more pupils to school is one centred around the model of forming ‘bubbles’ of people in order to limit the potential of transmission of the virus. The specific instruction to schools for the wider opening necessitates that small groups of pupils are formed, and are protected in such a manner that there is no risk of physical contact with any person from another bubble. Hence new classes are formed, with an allocated teacher, with no option of introducing different students or a change of teacher. Teachers allocated to be on-site are removed from the remote-teaching programme and focus on on-site supervision. Facilities, including the classroom, allocated to each bubble may not be used by any other bubble or by any other person. Numbers are maintained such that two-metre physical distancing can be promoted as far as possible at all times. Accordingly, these prescriptions were accompanied by a government-issued limit so that only a maximum of a quarter of Lower Sixth students might be permitted to attend the school site during any one day.

Such restrictions, whilst considered vital for the safety of school staff and pupils, present great barriers to the delivery of a meaningful, senior-school educational curriculum. Our pupils benefit from class allocations that enable different pupils to be supported with appropriate pace and curriculum cover – the stipulations during this phased re-opening period would mean that students on-site would be allocated each to a single class group, regardless of their levels of skill-strength and weakness, their identified learning needs, or level of study for that subject, and regardless of their chosen Sixth Form subjects. They would be supported by a single member of the teaching staff, meaning that for most, if not all of their time in school, they would not have access to a subject-specialist. They would remain in one room, with an allocated outdoor space for break-times whilst maintaining the integrity of their social ‘bubble’. Whilst this approach lends itself more to a primary-

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school teaching model, and describes the manner in which we are currently meeting the needs of our Year Six pupils, such limitations diminish greatly the educational and social benefits of attending school physically for Sixth Form students. Furthermore, published guidance states that students travelling to and from school should avoid using shared transport for their commutes, and especially not use public transport.

The government's strategy has been designed to combat concerns that in the vast majority of state-maintained secondary schools and Sixth Form colleges, and in many independent settings, there has now been no face-to-face interaction between students and their teachers since the 20th March, with a majority of settings issuing only pre-set exercises and worksheets.

The guidance therefore states that the government is asking secondary schools and Sixth Form settings to:

"provide some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 pupils, with a clear expectation that remote education will continue to be the predominant form of education delivery for these year groups",

[Guidance for secondary school provision from 15 June 2020.](#)

In determining what is in the best interests of our Lower Sixth students, we have consulted with the lead teacher for each academic department, seeking to establish the possible benefits and potential drawbacks of diluting a focus on the teaching of a remote curriculum in order to supervise up to a quarter of our Year Twelve students on any one day, in school from the 15th June. Our assessment is that, in the case of the vast majority of our boys, they are making better than expected academic progress during this remote-teaching period and, due to the nature of the restrictions on the management of students accessing school premises, attending school in person during this period would inhibit their education rather than enhance it, whilst simultaneously increasing risk.

Our remote, online provision is comprehensive and strong, affording regular face-to-face contact between students and their teachers, and enabling class sets to be maintained, taught by their regular, subject-specialist teacher. In all subjects, our Sixth Formers are addressing the demands of their course syllabi and submitting work for assessment and feedback. Teachers are, in very many cases, making themselves available to support students far beyond the constraints of the timetable, responding to the class Teams chat function and to emails in order to provide responsive and effective encouragement and support of students' learning according to their need.

To take individual subject-specialists away from this work in order to provide non-specialist supervision in school for an increased number of pupils, jeopardises the quality and schedule of remote-learning resource, not just for Lower Sixth students, but also for other year groups. It is understandable, therefore, that we have concluded that arranging for a maximum of seven Lower Sixth students to come in for periods in school will not improve the educational provision for students, and instead would reduce it. The very limited possible benefits are greatly outweighed by the disadvantages to students, and cannot be justified in terms of educational benefit to Sixth Formers, or in terms of increased risk of transmitting the virus.

We have therefore used this as an opportunity to consider how we might realise the intentions of the government directions for Year Twelve students in a far more effective manner. Lower Sixth students in particular have been identified since they expect to sit public examinations at the conclusion of their accredited courses, in the summer of next year. We believe that it is appropriate to prioritise Year Twelve students at this time, and we have therefore put in place plans for the following, taking effect from Monday, 15th June:

- the frequency of face-to-face 'live' lessons will be increased for Lower Sixth students, so that the minimum expectation for the number of face-to-face 'live' lessons doubles. The purpose is to afford greater direct access to their teachers for Lower Sixth boys whilst managing staff workload so that it is sustainable, and whilst not adversely impacting the experiences of pupils in other age-groups;
- individual Lower Sixth pupils whose educational progress in response to the remote-provision is the cause of significant concern to the Sixth Form pastoral team or to their subject-teachers will be invited to attend school on an occasional or more regular basis in order to be supervised in their engagement with the online remote provision; such students have been identified by their teachers and their number is extremely small – their parents will be contacted directly over the coming days.

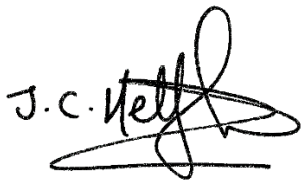
This approach will afford all Lower Sixth the best possible experience within the published guidelines, and avoids the significant disruption to the delivery of the curriculum posed by alternative approaches.

'Live' lessons, and especially the face-to-face element of live teaching, will very rarely extend to the duration of a timetabled lesson. Students who attend More House School generally experience particular difficulties with sustaining attention, and with processing large volumes of auditory information. In our classrooms at More House, teaching is characterised by

avoidance of lecture-style, didactic delivery for extended periods, recognising that such an approach disadvantages our boys and is usually not effective as a means of transferring knowledge or developing understanding. Teachers may therefore use the opening of a lesson for face-to-face contact before setting students an exercise to do which need not be live. They may open the chat function through the course of an activity to enable support of individual students. Or they may wish to bring students together towards the conclusion of a lesson in order to share responses, assess understanding and to identify and address misconceptions. Many teachers, especially with older students, welcome the opportunities that remote-teaching and time-flexibility afford for providing one-to-one, face-to-face support of individuals, often outside of timetabled lesson time.

The school's staff remains extremely grateful for the very many messages of encouragement and support received from pupils' parents, and for your continued support of your sons during this exceptional period nationally. We all, very much, look forward to a time in the near future when we can again welcome all our boys back onto the school site.

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