

A New Normal

Green: Phase 1

beginning Monday, September 7th 2020



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The Road to Returning

Taken from *Back to School: A Framework for August & Beyond* (published 24 July 2020)

Priorities

In our commitment to ensuring the safest, most robust 'Back to School' strategy that is within our capacity to provide, we are guided by the following priorities:

- the **health and safety** of the MST community and those with whom members of our community come into contact, particularly immunocompromised extended family members;
- the **mental health** of students and their parents, given both the domestic pressures on caregivers when campuses are closed, and the importance for children of social interaction with their peers;
- the primacy of **in-person learning** and its direct relationship to the social-emotional wellbeing of students; and
- maintaining the essential and unique characteristics of a **Montessori education** regardless of the medium of curriculum delivery.

The MST Traffic Light

We've chosen the traffic light - a universally recognised signifier - as a means for conveying the framework which we will adopt from August.

The Traffic Light consists of three different alert levels, with each level indicating a responsiveness to the evolving public health climate, and clear implications for how this translates to learning and teaching. Alert levels will be activated when necessary after careful consideration and analysis of the situation.

Green denotes a "new normal" and is the least restrictive level as regards access to campus and activities. We do not foresee that we will be able to return to processes and procedures as they were *before* campus closure began in March.

Orange signals the need to proceed with caution and to be relatively conservative in our approach. The blended learning programme (partial attendance with some online elements) during June 2020 and for the first 2 weeks of the 2020-21 academic year is considered to be at 'Orange' level.

Red indicates the highest alert level and therefore the most urgent need to safeguard the health of all. If activated, this alert level would necessitate a return to full campus-closure and for Learning from Home exclusively to resume.

Green: Phase 1 – A ‘New Normal’ beginning September 7th, 2020

What does ‘Phase 1’ mean?

We anticipate that the return to full-day, on-campus learning for students will be only the *first step* of several that will eventually lead us back to something that resembles ‘pre-Covid-19 MST’ more closely. The timeline of this remains unclear and progress in this regard is unlikely to be consistent and linear. ‘Phase 1’ indicates that while students will return to campus for full-days, many other programmes and activities will continue to be restricted in some way.

We plan to be dynamic and responsive to the developing health climate and, in so doing, certain policies or procedures may be amended *within* the ‘Phase 1’ period. Any such changes will be communicated to parents either by class teachers or by school-wide broadcast, depending on the nature of any given amendment. We anticipate that the majority of the conditions described in this document will be in place from now until at least the October Break (commencing October 26th). The next major evaluation of MST programming will take place with a view to any potential significant changes being implemented in November 2020.

What will ‘Green: Phase 1’ look like?

Beginning from Monday, September 7th, the MST traffic light turns **green**. Key features of the initial return to full campus reopening will be as follows:

- All MST students will be invited to attend MST campuses for **full school hours, five days per week** (exact arrival and departure schedule below).
- Various **health and safety** protocols and **attendance restrictions** will continue to apply to help mitigate the risk of infection within the MST community.
- Resources will be focused on the school’s core mission of delivering a world-class **Montessori education** to the children of Tokyo. Various non-classroom **activities** and programmes will continue to be modified, reduced or postponed during ‘Green: Phase 1’

Daily Schedule & Drop-off / Pick-up Locations

Campus	Class	Drop-off/Pick-up location	Doors open	Start	End	
MAIN	Pine	Annex main entrance	08:20 ¹	08:30	15:20 ²	
	Cedar	Garden gate				
	Hazel					
	Olive	Elevator lobby				
	Sequoia	Main entrance				
	Maple	Elevator lobby	08:10	08:20	15:30	
	Oak					
NEW	Ginkgo	Main entrance				
	Willow	Basement				
	Eucalyptus	Main entrance				09:00

¹ New Early Childhood students begin with shortened visits and days will increase gradually as per teacher guidance.

² In order to more effectively stagger pick-ups, we are introducing a 10-minute window for parents and caregivers of Early Childhood students who are now welcome to collect their child(ren) between 15:20 and 15:30 each day.

³ On Fridays and on certain other days (due to an all-faculty meeting or prior to a national holiday, for instance), Middle School students are dismissed at 15:30.

Health & Safety Protocols

MST will consult directly with local health officials who will give us guidance whenever specific scenarios arise that have not been addressed in this document or greater clarity is required on how best to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 spreading in the MST community. If you have any specific questions that are not addressed here, please email info@montessorijapan.com at any time to request guidance.

Covid-19 is spread through contact with:

- infected people;
- droplets that are expelled through the mouths and noses of infected people when they breathe and talk;
- droplets that have settled in the environment after infected people have been in an enclosed space; and
- many different people, who may or may not have been taking adequate precautions.

Based on this understanding, MST's approach to returning to full campus reopening will prioritise the following countermeasures, over which our community can retain various levels of control:

Tier 1: Preventing contact with those who are sick
Staff and students with a fever or symptoms must stay home



Tier 2: Preventing droplets settling in the environment
Mask wearing, ventilation, restricted activities, no sharing of food and strict adherence to hygiene guidelines with regard to use of equipment



Tier 3: Eliminating droplets
Regular mandated handwashing/sanitizing, frequent cleaning



Tier 4: Minimising contact
Aiming to reduce both the amount of people with whom MST community members come into contact, and the likelihood of contact with people who are at potentially greater risk of infection



Tier 5: Social distancing
Minimising physical contact with others, reducing student density where possible, maintaining Zoom use for meetings and conferences

The Five Tiers Explained

Tier 1: Preventing contact with those who are sick

Contact with symptomatic people is something over which the MST community has **significant control**. Every family's consistent vigilance and honesty in this regard will be key in keeping on-campus learning available to everyone. This first tier of defense against the spread of Covid-19 requires a strict adherence to MST's symptom and sickness protocol as outlined immediately below.

- Check your child's temperature every morning before leaving home.
- If your child (or anyone in your home) is feverish or displaying any other symptoms of illness, particularly a dry cough or significant fatigue, we ask the entire household to err on the side of caution and **stay away from school**.
- Children who have a temperature of 37.5° Celsius or more will **not be admitted to campus** (a period of 'cooling down' will be permitted after arrival).
- Anyone exhibiting a fever must be fever-free for 48 hours before returning to school. This is a Covid-specific requirement that is an increase on MST's regular requirement of 24 hours fever free.
- If a fever persists for more than 48 hours, a visit to a doctor for their professional assessment is required before returning to school. We also ask that all household members, including siblings, self-quarantine away from MST until the illness is 'resolved' (confirmed not to be Covid-19) or a medical professional confirms that a return to school is acceptable.
- MST staff and faculty will also be required to follow the same protocol and **err on the side of caution** if exhibiting any signs of poor health.

Tier 2: Preventing droplets settling in the environment

Reducing the likelihood of droplets settling and spreading at school is something over which the MST community has **substantial control**. While we can never completely eliminate sneezes or the touching of door handles and taps, there is much we can do to **reduce** the risk of infection.

- **Masks** will be required both for all staff and all students in the Elementary level and above, and encouraged where appropriate for younger children. The wearing of masks will not be rigorously enforced during outdoor activities and students **may not** wear masks outdoors on hot days when heat stroke is a legitimate health concern.
- Teachers will support students to understand and follow effective mask use practices, with the mask covering both the nose and mouth.
- All classrooms and other school spaces will be **ventilated** to the best of our ability. This means that windows will be opened at regular intervals throughout the day and air conditioning units will be running consistently.
- Certain activities that result in a higher likelihood of droplets spreading in the environment will be restricted during 'Green: Phase 1'. Examples include:
 - *Singing in enclosed spaces and/or use of wind instruments*
 - *Eating in close proximity to others*
 - *Communal snack / lunch*
 - *Indoor athletic activities that involve consistent close-contact*
- Sharing and/or handling of sports equipment, stationery, library books, etc. by multiple students will be reduced or eliminated to the best of our ability.

Tier 3: Eliminating droplets

Through a systematic and rigorous approach to sanitizing MST facilities and keeping key focus on personal hygiene, eliminating harmful droplets is something over which the MST community has **substantial control**. While we can not guarantee the elimination of every potentially harmful droplet, there is much we can do to **reduce** the risk of infection.

- During the first two weeks of the academic year, we developed a **rigorous cleaning schedule** to minimise the risk of infection, including the regular and systematic wiping of high-touch and high-use surfaces.
- **Handwashing** will continue to be mandated for all students upon arrival at MST, before and after snack/lunch and before/after each transition to another part of the school (garden, MPR, library etc).
- As introduced in June, each Early-Childhood student is to be chaperoned by an adult to the bathroom and handwashing will be monitored before and after using the toilet, and before and after eating snack. For the time being, adults will turn taps on/off, and pump the soap bottle with a paper towel).
- All communal areas of MST will be **continuously cleaned and sanitized** throughout the day by our team of custodial staff.
- The interior of the school bus will be **cleaned and sanitized** after each use.
- All MST classrooms, including hands-on materials used by students, and frequently-touched surfaces will be regularly **cleaned and disinfected**.
- Food preparation activities and communal snack will not be provided by MST during the Green: Phase 1 period. Students should continue to bring a simple individual snack to school daily.

Tier 4: Minimising contact

The key priority during 'Green: Phase 1' is the full day attendance for all students and a return to Montessori environments and materials. This requires consistent and daily contact between students and staff. **Minimising contact with other third parties**, and any high-risk contact amongst MST community members, is our fourth defensive measure against the spread of Covid-19 and something over which the MST community has **substantial control**.

- Opportunities for MST parents to come on campus, such as Mystery Reader or Birthday Celebrations, will continue to be restricted. Online alternatives may be considered in some cases.
- External instructors and any non-essential visitors will not be permitted on campus.
- In cases where someone is permitted on campus for essential work on-site e.g. maintenance or construction work, etc. they will be required to follow the same health and safety protocols as our staff, including temperature taking, handwashing, shoe disinfection, etc.
- School tours, parent interviews for prospective families, Parent Teacher Conferences, and other similar activities will continue online.
- Restricted in-person visits at the discretion of school administration as part of our admissions process for prospective families will be reintroduced and all visiting prospective families will follow safety protocols.
- Outside of school hours, decisions about the level of exposure to others is entirely at the discretion of each family. MST encourages all families to exercise a commensurate level of caution where possible for the protection of all in the school community by avoiding higher risk situations (e.g. sleepovers and 'potluck' parties) and following the guidance on **avoiding the "Three C's"** (Closed Spaces, Crowded Places and Close-Contact settings).
- In line with current government guidelines, any international traveller is required to participate in 14 days of self-quarantine upon their return to Japan. It remains the case that any family member living in the same home as someone who is self-quarantining after international travel would also be required to stay away from MST for the full duration of the quarantine period.

Tier 5: Social distancing

*Social distancing remains an important protocol, yet one which is **difficult to control** in a uniform way across every programme. A student's capacity to understand and respect personal space increases with age and it is therefore unrealistic to expect the same adherence to social distancing between an Early Childhood student and a Middle School student, for instance. For school to resume in a functional way that allows meaningful interactions and learning to take place, it is reasonable to expect that strict social distancing protocols can not be assured. We will be as watchful as possible about the physical distance between everyone on campus, and guide and support students to respect personal space and social distancing in age-appropriate ways. If as a community we maintain vigilance in prioritising the first four defensive measures as detailed above, the risk of community infection at this fifth tier will be relatively low.*

- The **no-handshaking policy** when teachers greet and farewell students will remain in place.
- Physical contact of other forms will be minimised where possible.
- Every available space (garden, library, MPR, and new campus rooftop and basement) will be actively deployed where possible in order to **reduce student density** in the classrooms.
- **Staggered arrival** and departure times will reduce parent and student clusters at drop-off and pick-up.
- Whole School Meetings for all staff will continue to be conducted over **Zoom**; meetings that are smaller in size between two or more members of staff will adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Other measures include:

- The student/adult ratio in all Early Childhood classes has been temporarily reduced in order to ensure an increased ability for staff to monitor safety measures/hygiene and perform daily cleaning responsibilities in classes where social distancing and other protocols are more challenging to implement. This has been achieved by:
 - capping Early Childhood classes at 90% capacity for the first quarter of the academic year; and
 - increasing support staff hours dedicated to our Sunshine classrooms.
- Student density in our Elementary Oak and Maple classrooms will be reduced by engaging Enrichment faculty/programmes and Elementary support staff to ensure we maximise supervised use of available spaces in the Main Building, including library, MPR and Art Studio.
- Taking advantage of smaller class sizes for Ginkgo (Lower Elementary) and Eucalyptus (Middle School), combined with newly completed facilities and space in the New Campus (roof garden and our newly developed - and well-ventilated - basement spaces) will allow us to ensure reduced student density across the New Campus.

Non-Classroom Activities & Enrichment Programmes

Bus Service

Operational with windows open and air conditioning on; temperature check must register < 37.5° Celsius as a condition of boarding; hand sanitization; mandatory masks; social distancing where possible (not full capacity); and cleaning and disinfection after each use.

Library

Accessible to students throughout the day as a way of minimising student density, particularly in the Oak and Maple classrooms; cap on the number of students who are permitted to be there at any given time; masks and handwashing conditions of entry; book 'checkout service' provided to all families.

Garden

Accessible to students throughout the day as a way of minimising student density in Main Campus classrooms; masks and handwashing as conditions of entry; will continue to be used for Early Childhood recess daily (except in the case of severe heat).

Lunch

Kiwi Kitchen available; no group snack or communal food preparation; Sunshine and Upper Elementary students eat lunch in groups that are 50% of class size. Other Elementary classes will utilise additional non-classroom spaces to ensure adequate space for lunch time.

Music & Art

Small group lessons offered throughout the week during class time to help reduce student density in all Elementary classrooms. No sharing of equipment OR, if sharing is necessary, thorough wipe-down and disinfection of equipment between each student's use. Singing to be conducted only in a well-ventilated space and at a softer volume with the use of masks.

PE

Will take place at the regular facility (Shibaura Gymnasium); new start time of 09:00 ensures MST is the first group to have exclusive use of the facilities each day, given it is cleaned once daily at the end of each day; all windows and doors open and air conditioning on; mandated handwashing and sanitizing prior to entry; only activities that either don't require equipment, or that minimise the need to touch equipment, or where there is sufficient equipment for students to each have their own.

Sunshine Enrichment Activities	Activities led by external instructors will not be offered during class time for the time being. Rather, Sunshine students will be invited to join limited online ASAs for the duration of Green: Phase 1 (see below).
ASAs	Online ASA activities run by external instructors will be offered without charge to parents; limited ASAs run by MST instructors will begin from September 14th; review of ASAs with a potential update from November 2nd onwards.
ITP	In-person 1-on-1 ITPs run by MST instructors from September 14th; online 1-on-1 classes with non-MST instructors; review of ITP with a potential update from November 2nd onwards.
Inter-school Activities	Will not take place for the first quarter at the very least. We will reassess the situation in November 2020.
Field Trips	Will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Some outdoor trip options that require only use of the MST bus for transportation (or can be reached on foot) may be considered. Daily park visits by a small percentage of Early Childhood students may be utilised to reduce student density in the MST garden during recess. Elementary students will continue to utilise local parks for recess.
Camp and Overnight Trips	Will not take place for the remainder of 2020. We will reassess the situation closer to the end of this calendar year and decide whether such trips might be considered safe from 2021 at the earliest.

Protocol in the event of a positive Covid-19 case within the MST community

If a student or family member is diagnosed with Covid-19 please inform the school right away. MST will also be informed independently of a positive test within our community by the Minato-ku Health Department. If the infected person has been present on one of the campuses, we will do the following:

1. **Coordinate with local health officials.** Once learning of a Covid-19 case, we will follow the guidance of local health officials to determine a course of action for our community.
2. **Clean and disinfect thoroughly.** Areas used by the individual(s) with Covid-19 will be closed off and staff will wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimise potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Outside doors and windows will be opened to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, we will wait up to 72 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection. Custodial staff will clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the infected person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
3. **Close campuses for 2-5 school days.** This initial short-term closure allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the Covid-19 situation and to help the school determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended closure duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of Covid-19. During this time staff, students, and their families are discouraged from gathering or socializing anywhere. This includes group child care arrangements, as well as gathering at places like a friend's house, a favourite restaurant, or the local parks.
4. **Communicate with staff, parents, and students.** MST will coordinate with local health officials to communicate decisions for further closure as well as information regarding the possible Covid-19 exposure amongst the community.
5. **Maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member.** Note that all household members and close contacts of the infected person will be asked to self-quarantine away from MST for as long as required by local health officials.