



7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, Carers

I am sure you are aware that Medway and Gravesham have very high numbers of positive test cases currently as has been highlighted in the media. In this letter we wish to highlight some of the challenges which senior members of staff are facing in trying their best to support parents many of whom are clearly very anxious at this difficult time as evidenced by the number of communications to each of our schools.

Late last night and then early this morning we have been contacted by a representative of the Department for Education requesting our reasoning for closing Hilltop Primary Academy and certain year cohorts in all of our other schools. This person was adamant that every avenue should be explored before taking such steps. They will be phoning again this evening to check which avenues have been explored.

The Government has always been very clear that the ambition is for children to be in school, rightly pointing out that there are lesser COVID related dangers associated with the young and also there is the issue of the deterioration to mental health which prolonged absence from school can bring.

For those parents who are expecting a 'steer' from senior staff concerning whether they should send their son or daughter into school at this time, hopefully you can appreciate that that is impossible given what has been explained above. Clearly we all need to bear in mind the advice coming from our Government whilst being aware of our own personal situations and then do the right thing in the best interests of family members.

For those parents who are suggesting to senior members of staff that during the last week of term pupils should learn remotely and therefore shield so that family members might be visited over Christmas, again we are unable to agree to such a request given what has been outlined above.

We do hope you can appreciate our position.

Nikki King CBE and Andy Reese CEO