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Dear Parents

Thank you for your ongoing support of the school, in very challenging times. We recognise that for our whole community there is an increasing level of anxiety around the rising rate of infections in and around Medway.

A number of parents have voiced concerns, particularly after local secondary schools have closed, that we should consider a circuit breaker closure of the school. This is fully understandable and is under constant consideration. We are, however, basing all our decisions on what is right for our children and our staff and are doing so around a set of thresholds we have set now for the past two weeks in terms of the school and risk of infection amongst our school community. If this is exceeded, we will make that choice for our school. This will be the case with or without other schools closing or remaining open.

If, as parents, you have concerns about the health of your children or there are concerns around your family unit, we feel now is not the time to do anything other than support our families in their decision making and if as parents you choose not to send your children to school for your own reasons, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

There are currently nine secondary schools closed in Medway and between 50 and 60 schools with year groups currently working at home. Medway, as of November 24th, had the fastest growing rate of infection in England and understandably, there are strong calls for a joined up approach.

Currently and I'm afraid this will be an ongoing situation, we are closing or adapting the approach to individual year groups and classes, often at short notice, when staffing issues make the situation impossible to manage safely. Parents are having to adapt their own arrangements at very short notice and we understand this can be disruptive. We are doing this in order to keep as many classes open, with the staff we have available in each year group, for as much of the week as we can. If your child's class or year group has to close for a short period over the next two weeks, due to staffing, we will provide online learning and re-open the class as soon as we can.

The frustration of the situation is of the twenty members of staff currently unavailable for all or part of the week, the majority of absence is down to self-isolation due to year group closures in other schools and the childcare issues this presents. About 6% of all our staff are off for other medical issues, which

is quite normal and only a tiny percentage are directly due to Coronavirus and they have had no contact with children.

Which leaves us in a situation where we may soon have all the children back, but not the staff to manage and teach them. We are not bringing in supply staff who have not been in school for the long term, because we feel the risk of teachers travelling from school to school at the moment is too great.

None of this is very helpful and I'm really sorry that the only clarity is that we are going to carry on in the way that we are, which is far from ideal, until the picture around Coronavirus in the school, for our children, staff and families, means a potential circuit breaker is not only the best step, but also one which does not invite the virus into the school at the end of the term and therefore into your homes over Christmas.