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21 June 2019

Ian Sutherland
Director of Children and Adult Services
Medway Council

Cllr Martin Potter
Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools
Medway Council

Dear Cllr Potter and Mr Sutherland,

RE: your letter dated 20th June 2019.

We are pleased that your letter acknowledges our efforts to address the concerns expressed by some members of the local community about the merger of Stoke and Allhallows Primaries. It is encouraging to see that Medway Council is beginning to adjust its position following its earlier objection, but we note that you are still not able to provide your unconditional support.

Regarding points in your letter, the Trust is committed to providing a minibus service for at least three years for those pupils who attend the merged primary from September 2019. We will review the service annually to ensure it meets the needs of the academy and its pupils. This review will take place formally with results shared publicly, as you have requested. Subject to each review, we will determine whether the service is required for the full seven years that those pupils starting in reception in September 2019 will attend the school.

Furthermore, we are committed to providing a flexible minibus service taking account of extracurricular activities, breakfast and after school clubs.

The minibus service will pick up in the parking bays of Stoke Primary and drop pupils off inside the grounds of Allhallows Primary. It's worth noting that this meets an important request made by local parents received during our consultation. Shelter will be offered at Allhallows, inside the school building, in the event of inclement weather whilst pupils wait for transport.

As you state, should the DfE agree for the merger to go ahead, we will work closely with parents and the local community through the transition phase to September.

The Trust will also want to work closely with Medway Council regarding the termination of the lease at Stoke. Under the terms of the lease, it will automatically terminate after 30-days following the termination of Stoke Primary's funding agreement. We will provide written notice as soon as possible once confirmation is received from the DfE.

Regarding your last paragraph about potential and speculative future population growth, we would point out that Medway's own figures published in September 2018 do not support this assertion. Those figures show that primaries in Peninsula East will remain at 50% of capacity until 2023 at the very earliest. Meanwhile, the schools will carry on accumulating an unmanageable financial deficit with serious consequences for the education of the children.


Should the speculative developments around Stoke and Allhallows go ahead in future years, Paul Clarke's recent email to me confirmed that this will yield no more than half a form of entry per year group. This will still leave considerable capacity in primaries in Peninsula East.

Should there be an unforeseen increase in the numbers of pupils, we stand ready to work with Medway Council to double the published admissions number at Allhallows Primary to two-forms of entry. Given the existing abundant availability of land and buildings at Allhallows, this can be achieved for around £1.5m using funds from s106. This figure was provided to us by officers within the Council.

I am sorry we have not been able to reach a full agreement on this proposal even after the several pledges made by the Trust to address concerns raised during the consultation. In total, 58 people have raised objections which is approximately equivalent to 2.1% of the combined population of Stoke and Allhallows.

Given the very real and compelling arguments regarding educational poor performance and financial sustainability, recorded in other correspondence, the Trust has no choice but to press ahead to seek approval from the DfE for its school merger plan.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Beamish
Chief Executive

cc: Kelly Tolhurst, MP
David Watkins, Medway Council
Jonathan Duff, Regional Schools' Commissioner's Office
Deonne Rowland, Regional Schools' Commissioner's Office
Matt Morley, Regional Schools' Commissioner's Office