



The Dover Federation

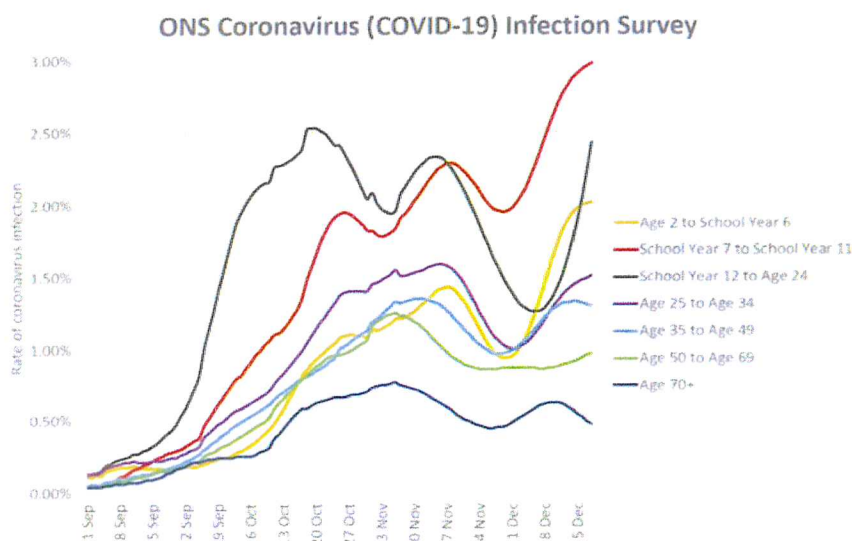
For The Arts Multi Academy Trust

4 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

The last few days have seen much speculation around children returning to school this week. Secondary schools have seen the return put back by a week for years 11 and 13 and two weeks for all other year groups. Many areas of Kent have also seen primary schools told to remain closed to children other than for key workers and vulnerable pupils. Dover is only one of four districts where that has not happened, the others being Thanet, Folkestone and Canterbury.

I want to try and explain, without any spin, why many teachers and school staff are concerned by this decision. The Office for National Statistics has been closely monitoring the spread of the virus since it began and has been making its data available to everyone. The nature of the new strain has changed how Covid 19 is spreading. It is now spreading fastest in the younger age groups. The table below shows how the rate has increased in which age groups.



A number of the teachers' unions have raised concerns with the government around the data and what is being put in place to protect children, staff and their families given that what was in place last term has not stopped the virus spreading so quickly. One union has advised staff not to attend school next week as SAGE (the government's own Scientific Advisory Group) has advised them not to reopen schools as they are unsafe. Kent County Council have been in discussion with the government about why the four districts have been kept open and they believe all Kent schools should be shut. Especially given that the two main hospitals in Kent are now reporting that all the intensive care beds are full and patients are being moved to other counties.

Before Christmas, the government took legal action against Greenwich Council which closed all its schools and then had to make them reopen. Because of this Kent are unwilling to issue an instruction to close all schools but they have written to Gavin Williamson (Secretary of State for Education) asking him to reconsider. I have been told that the Government will meet on Tuesday to reconsider the data.

The Prime Minister, on Sunday morning television said, there was “no doubt in my mind that they are safe”. Unfortunately, I do not share his belief. In the week before we broke up for Christmas Astor had 34 Positive cases amongst the children and the Primary Schools had 14. We have also seen first-hand how dreadful this virus can be and my condolences go to our families who have been hit the hardest. This is clearly a concern for many of you and I completely understand those concerns. Attendance before Christmas across all the schools was very low with many parents choosing to keep their children at home. We have been asked what will happen if they decide not to send children back straight away. As with last term, we will not be asking Kent to issue any fines and we will fully support your decision.

Given the stance by the main teachers’ union for teachers not to attend school for health and safety reasons we are taking the decision to keep the primary schools closed to children, other than for key workers and vulnerable pupils, until Thursday. This will give us time to evaluate the situation and see if the advice from the government changes after their meeting on Tuesday.

None of us want to see schools shut but it is far more important to keep children and their families safe at this time. Thank you for your continued support during these incredibly difficult times.

Very best wishes



Mr D Meades

CEO