



**High Weald Academy**  
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Principal: Mr Nigel Jones

Tuesday 12th October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

**RE: Further update on closure of High Weald Academy (HWA)**

I wrote to you last week with some points of clarification from Leigh Academies Trust (LAT) related to comments made as part of the current “listening exercise”. LAT thought it would be useful at this stage to address the question some have asked about why there has been no full public consultation prior to the ministerial closure decision.

It’s important to understand that the Secretary of State has already decided to close HWA and LAT has set out how this is likely to occur in the pack of materials sent to parents and the wider community just over two weeks ago. Due to the decision to close and unlike other secondary schools, we have not held an open event this year for potential new year 7 pupils and their parents.

The current “listening exercise” is not about whether the school should close, but rather how the closure should be managed. According to the government’s own guidance, we have now moved to “stage 5” of this closure process. “Stage 6”, which will begin at the end of the “listening exercise”, is the final stage before arrangements can be completed. At no previous stage did a requirement exist to carry out a full public consultation.

Government guidance on “stage 5” which is already underway states:

*“The Secretary of State will decide whether the funding agreement should be terminated and the school should close. The department will communicate the Secretary of State’s decision to the academy trust.*

*“Following a substantive decision from the Secretary of State to proceed to closure, the academy trust should share news of the closure with pupils, parents, staff, unions, relevant LAs and schools elsewhere in the local area at the earliest opportunity and conduct a listening period.*

*“The listening period is an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to be provided with information as to why the school is closing and how it is proposed the closure process will operate. Likewise, it is an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to submit their views on how the school closure process can be best managed.”*

Cont’d



In respect of the final stage ("stage 6") that we will soon embark upon, the same government guidance continues:

*"The Secretary of State will consider the outcome of the listening period and give permission for the trust to announce details of the closure. It is the academy trust's responsibility....to ensure that all closure obligations are met."*

As mentioned to you in my last letter, a reminder that the Local Authority's deadline to submit your choice of onward school for your son or daughter is **Friday 22nd October**. Well over half of parents have now done so and we are grateful for their feedback.

Following the decision by some parents to remove their children from HWA early, the number of pupils in years 7-10 currently on roll has now fallen to 158. No pupils in year 11 have left HWA's school roll and this is important to ensure continuity during their final year of GCSE studies. For those parents who prefer to wait until the published school transfer dates or who cannot find a place earlier, all of the staff at HWA will continue working hard for the whole year to ensure standards carry on improving across the board.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Jones', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Nigel Jones

Principal