Dear Bob,

SECURE SCHOOLS- SITE ANNOUNCEMENT

I am writing to tell you that today, the Secretary of State has announced at the Conservative Party Conference that Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) is to close so that we can open the first Secure School there as part of a cross-Government initiative to improve youth custody.

This decision has been taken in response to the Charlie Taylor Review, which recommended establishing Secure Schools to improve outcomes for children in custody.

Secure Schools represent a real opportunity for us to deliver meaningful change in the youth custody sector and to really make a difference for the children in our care. Delivering the first Secure School at Medway will provide a fresh start for youth custodial provision in the South East and ensure that provision remains in place in this crucial area of demand.

Medway STC has been providing much improved care for a very complex and vulnerable group of children and this decision is not a reflection on that work, which was recently recognised in an Ofsted report. However, Secure Schools represent an entirely new approach to managing youth custody and are the best solution to address violence in the youth estate, improve outcomes for children leaving custody and reduce the unacceptably high level of reoffending in this sector.

The closure of Medway will enable us to set up the first school as quickly and cost effectively as possible, and it is the first step towards our future vision for youth custody. The school will be run by a not-for-profit academy trust rather than HM Prison and Probation Service with a focus on delivering an integrated service based on individual need and with education and healthcare at its heart.

Staff and children will be told of the changes today and our focus for now is on making sure they are fully supported in the coming days.

Further to the site announcement today, an application and selection process for the provider will be launched later this month. We have worked in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, Department of Education, NHS England and small charities who work with children to make sure the process achieves our aims.
The performance management of the Secure School will remain with the Ministry of Justice and the Youth Custody Service will be responsible for referring children to the new school. We are working closely with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to establish the inspection regime for Secure Schools, and this will be supplemented by monthly independent visitor reviews and independent oversight from organisations such as the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board.

I hope you will join us in welcoming this major step forward in our key youth custody initiative and continue to support us as we work towards delivering further Secure Schools and improving the youth custody estate.

Yours Sincerely,

EDWARD ARGAR