



Councillor Danny Thorpe
Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich

Sunday, 13th December 2020

Dear parents, carers and families across Royal Greenwich,

I'm writing this open letter to let you know the situation in Greenwich in relation to Covid19 is now escalating extremely quickly and I have today been briefed by colleagues from Public Health England that the pandemic in Greenwich is now showing signs that we are in **a period of exponential growth that demands immediate action.**

We now have the highest rates of infection in Greenwich than at any time since March, and for these reasons I have therefore asked all schools in Greenwich to close their premises from Monday evening and move to online learning for the duration of the term, with the exception of key worker children and those with specific needs (exactly the same as in the first lockdown).

It is absolutely essential that everyone understands this is NOT an opportunity to extend Christmas celebrations in any way, and I'm asking for this to happen to reduce the risk of transmission.

The Council has been in working in partnership with schools to ensure we provide over 8,000 breakfast boxes to children across Greenwich and support families eligible for free school meals. We will continue this work and schools will communicate to those who need to know how this support will be provided.

Finally, I recognize the disruption this is likely to cause and am extremely sorry for that. As a former teacher, I know firsthand just how essential schools are for our children and young people and the work they have done to support your children through this extremely challenging year has been extraordinary. We are lucky to have such dedicated teachers and school staff across Greenwich.

I wouldn't be asking for this unless the risk was extreme, but with numbers rising so rapidly it is clear action is needed.

Please ensure that you look out for communications from your school and keep an eye on the Council's communications and the news. Although London is currently in tier 2, this is being reviewed by the Government who will advise us shortly about the decisions they make.

The Leader's Office, Town Hall, Wellington Street, Woolwich, London SE18 6PW

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Finally, I have a big ask for all Greenwich parents, carers and families tonight.

We are working with the Government and councils across London to increase the availability of testing within London across the coming days and weeks. We have already been piloting this in some schools, and this will expand.

But in the coming days we would like as many people to come forward and get tested as possible, so that we can ensure those people that have the virus are identified and we do reduce the risk of further spreading. Please keep a look out for communications about how you and your families can get tested.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Thorpe', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Danny Thorpe

Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich