



Councillor Danny Thorpe
Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich

Sunday, 13th December 2020

Dear Headteachers,

I'm sorry to disturb a weekend, but frankly I know they almost seem a thing of the past given how hard you are working. I've had a number of conversations with heads over the last week and I know how difficult things have been, especially the last week.

It has become clear in the last few days that rates of Covid19 are rising extremely rapidly, both within Greenwich and across London. The latest data seems to suggest the rate of infection is doubling in the city every 4 days, and last night it was confirmed that Greenwich now has the highest record levels of Covid than at any time since the start of the pandemic. Indeed, colleagues from public health have advised that Greenwich, with many other boroughs, is now in a period of **exponential growth that demands immediate action.**

For these reasons, I am asking all schools in Greenwich need to close their premises at the end of the day tomorrow with the exception of key workers and vulnerable children, and move to a remote learning offer for the duration of the term.

This is honestly one of the most difficult questions I have wrestled with during all my time as Leader. The DFE are clear this isn't their position and indeed have issued directives to some schools. However, I cannot in all good conscience stand by whilst the numbers are doubling so quickly. If the numbers are indeed doubling every 4 days, they would do so again by this Thursday, exposing more people to risk.

As many of you know, I am a qualified teacher, and as such I know first hand just how important schools are for children, especially the most vulnerable we look after. I know also we are in the middle of the biggest distribution of food and support for families who have had probably the worst year of their lives. I'm determined we will do that in a safe way and the team will be in touch with more details.

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

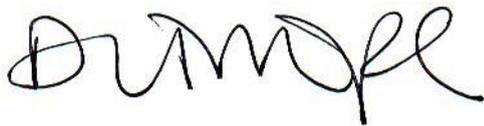
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It is likely that mass community testing is going to be accelerated in the city in the coming days, and we are already piloting testing within schools to keep people safe. We will be working to ensure we can build and accelerate this to support schools to return safely in January.

I will be sending a letter to you shortly which I would ask you to disseminate via parent mail tonight please, alongside the communications you will need to send.

Finally, can I say again just how much I value and respect the utterly extraordinary work you have done during this year, and I'm sorry that it has come to this at the end of the year. Here 's hoping we get reduced rates of infection as quickly as possible.

With best wishes,

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

Councillor Danny Thorpe

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