



14 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Remote Learning from Tuesday 15 December

I apologise for another letter so late in the day, however it is important that I relay the position that the school is in and the decisions that we are having to make.

Over the last 24 hours the school has been required to make decisions, taken in good faith giving due attention to the information and guidance received from Royal Borough of Greenwich and latterly the Department of Education. Both corresponding late in the school day and both requiring immediate responses and decisions. There is now a stand off between the Government and Greenwich Council and Headteachers are feeling very compromised and caught in the middle. However, I truly believe that we have, and continue to make decisions in the best interests of our children and made plans accordingly to support local efforts to control the virus and reduce the rates of infection locally.

Firstly, the school's decision on Sunday evening to follow the advice of the council, which informed us that 'Greenwich, with many other boroughs, is now in a period of exponential growth that demands immediate action'.

Greenwich data shared with schools this evening included that:

- The figures for the week ending the 11th December for children and staff self-isolating were significantly higher than we have recorded on previous weeks (an approximate 40%-50% increase).
- Public Health have now advised that today, the 7-day case rate for Greenwich is now 59% higher than at the same point last week.

Therefore, on the understanding that cases were rising significantly and that the school was 'required to act immediately', we followed the advice given and the school moved to provide remote learning for all pupils from Tuesday 15 December.

You will be aware that the Department of Education has this afternoon challenged that position and wrote to Greenwich schools stating that 'I believe there is no place in our response to this pandemic for unilateral action such as Greenwich Council has taken' And asking 'I would appreciate you confirming directly with your school community your intention to remain open for face to face education from tomorrow....'.

This leaves the school in a untenable position, and I have therefore spoken with members of the governing body and the senior leadership team of the school to again make decisions that are in the best interests of our children. Furthermore, the school is also ready to follow any decision made as a result of the legal challenge.

Therefore, it is believed by the school that;

- The decision to move to remote learning from 15 December was made in good faith.
- The children are best served through receiving either all face-to-face or all remote and online teaching (with provision for key workers, EHCPs and vulnerable children). Because a hybrid of the two with half the children in and half out leaves everyone unsatisfied (this includes the teachers as well as children), as neither half gets their fullest attention and it is thus an unmanageable solution.
- An immediate '180' to have face-to-face education for all children on Tuesday 15 December is far too disruptive and confusing for children at this late stage.
- Children feel as if they have said 'goodbye' to their class for Christmas.

- There are parents who support the council's position and the need to move to remote learning as a result of the increase in coronavirus cases.
- Constant changing is worse than staying true to a decision and making it the best possible.

However recognising;

- Remote learning can be difficult for families.
- Child care has been re-arranged by families, and changing this back and forth is equally as frustrating.
- That there will be a ruling on the legal battle between the Department of Education and Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Although it must be noted that;

- Cases of coronavirus are undoubtedly rising and the school is already supporting the government's plan to put distance between end of term and the changes in social distance guidance from 23-27 December, by making Friday 18 December an INSET day.
- London is moving into Tier 3 from 00.01 Wednesday 16 December.

Therefore, with all of this in mind we have made the following decisions that tonight;

Tuesday 15 December will continue as arranged – Remote learning for all year groups, and the school open for children with EHCPs, vulnerable children and children of Key Workers. Staffing levels, lunches and staffing of the remote platforms have all been arranged accordingly.

That provision for Wednesday and Thursday will be reviewed tomorrow and in light of any further announcements.

Therefore, Wednesday and Thursday will be either;

- a. Continue with remote learning for all year groups with school open for EHCP, vulnerable and key worker children **but will also include** those families who have contacted the school on Tuesday and indicated that they are having difficulty with child care for those days.
- or
- b. All children return to school for face-to-face teaching.

Lastly, all of these decisions will be made as a result of the guidance received, and with the utmost confidence in the skill and dedication of our teachers to ensure that children's learning is maintained. I will be writing again tomorrow to keep you abreast of decisions.

I sincerely thank you all for your support and good wishes today as we have had to make sizeable decisions in the last week of a school term, and a calendar year that has seen unprecedented pressures placed on it by the pandemic we have all faced.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Bulpitt
Headteacher