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Dear Parents and Carers,

 I write to inform you that that Greenvale will be closed to all students on Monday 4th January. This is for a variey of reasons that all hinge on the health and safety of both our students and staff.

We have a number of concerns that have led to this decision.

* **Tier 4 and the DfE Contingency Framework.**

As a result of moving to Tier 4 we want to have an opportunity for our staff to consider and set up any further measures to ensure our young people are as safe as possible following the announcement of increased transmissibility of the new Covid variant. This was not possible last term due to the timing of the Government announcement. Such measures will include all students eating in classrooms and a reduction in contacts and movement across the school.

* **Testing Procedures and Protocols.**

The School already had plans in place to introduce testing twice weekly for staff. This now needs to be implemented more rapidly and therefore we need to have staff trained to carry out these tests.

The latest Government guidance also requires Secondary Special Schools to carry out testing of students. We plan to move slowly with this and with on-going consultation with parents. We do not plan to carry out such testing immediately but will require trained staff and well planned procedures. We need some time (like our mainstream secondary schools) to put any testing regime in place.

* **Staffing.**

As I am sure you are aware Lewisham is one of a very small number of London Boroughs that does not have all Primary schools closed. The impact for staff living in nearby boroughs of having their childrens’ schools closed is not yet clear and we now have additional consideration of Clinically vulnerable staff instructed to shield due to Tier 4. Last term the school remained open despite very high staff absence, we now need to assess the impact of all these new factors on our staffing.

At the end of last term the vast majority of students received their home learning pack. Please consider using this whilst your son / daughter is at home. We will also be creating more resources for you.

The Department for Education has given specific guidance to special schools to support you in making a decision about whether you send your son / daughter to school. Guidance states;

* [Shielding advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#further-advice-at-tier-4-stay-at-home) is currently in place in Tier 4 areas, and so all children and young people still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school.
* If the parent of a special school pupil wishes for their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know in advance that the pupil will not be attending and that they are making an application for a leave of absence. The Department for Education expects schools to grant such applications for leaves of absence given the exceptional circumstances. Whilst attendance is encouraged, it will not be mandatory and parents will not be penalised if their child does not attend.

We will be contacting you on Monday but if you have decided to keep your son/ daughter at home or if they are clinically extremely vulnerable please email us on schoolcontact@greenvaleschool.co.uk to inform us of your decision.

The DfE guidance has changed constantly right up until 6pm last night. The school needs time to implement these on-going measures. We want to keep every member of our community as safe as possible and we appreciate your cooperation in doing this. We are very keen to have our students all back in school as soon as appropriate measures are in place. Thank you for your on-going support.

We will be in contact on Monday via text message and email to confirm any alternative arrangements for the rest of the week.

Kindest regards



Lynne Haines