

Hello and happy new year to all Star readers.

With vaccinations taking place we can all continue to hope that 2021 will be better than 2020, but sadly we've got off to a start that many predicted – another national lockdown, including the closure of schools.

There's no doubt these new lockdown measures are needed. The virus is spreading rapidly, and the pressure on our NHS is real. We all need to keep doing the right thing.

The frustration and anger many people feel right now – including particularly those frontline workers in the NHS, social care, and schools – is that this was so clearly inevitable at least a week ago to everyone but the Prime Minister.

Since the start of the pandemic time and again the government have been exposed as being woefully behind the curve – on PPE, track and trace, testing, school exams, business support and much more. This could be forgiven at first as we entered an unprecedented crisis, but nearly a year into it there is no excuse.

Thousands of local residents have been directly affected by the government's latest dithering and delay over education this week.

On Sunday the PM was adamant that schools were safe to be fully opened, ignoring overwhelming advice to the contrary and insisting on sending millions of children into classrooms on Monday.

On Monday night at 8pm he then announced he was wrong the day before and that schools should close to all but vulnerable pupils and those of keyworkers. Aside from the obvious harm to public health of allowing millions of children to mix for one day, it also gave school staff, parents, carers and pupils no time at all to prepare properly for the next day.

At least now we have clarity and certainty for the foreseeable future, and I'm more grateful than ever to school staff and all keyworkers who I know will continue to do an outstanding job.

We all must follow the rules and do all we can to protect ourselves and each other. Get tested, get vaccinated, and we'll get through this together.