

Media Release

Date: 17 April 2020

Schools, colleges and early years providers to remain closed for most pupils

Schools, colleges and early years providers (pre-schools, nurseries and childminders) will remain closed during this coming half term, which lasts until 31st May, to all except vulnerable students and children of essential workers.

These arrangements have been in place since 23rd March and the Director of Public Health yesterday decided they should remain until the end of next month. However, the decision will be kept under review and education providers could open earlier if supported by evidence.

It is important that formal education resumes next week following this recent period of extended Easter holiday. As such, education staff have been working hard to prepare for these circumstances and all schools will now implement plans for Distance Learning that have been developed.

A guidance document will be sent to all parents via their child's school this afternoon to offer advice and information about how Distance Learning will work. Parents are being reassured that there is no expectation that they take on the role of teacher during this period, as schools will ensure parents and students are supported.

Deputy Gavin St. Pier, Chair of the Civil Contingencies Authority, said:

'It is important to be able to provide students, parents and education staff with certainty as the new term approaches. The closure of schools to the majority of students has played a key role in supporting our efforts to reduce the amount of community seeding. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of parents, many of whom are going through particularly challenging times as they balance their children being at home with having to continue to work, while also being understandably anxious about keeping their family safe.'

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health, said:

'It is really important that we don't make any decisions now that could result in us losing the gains we have made in the last four weeks. Closing schools, colleges and early years providers for all but those who are the children of essential workers and vulnerable students has been a key part of our response to this pandemic and has no doubt helped slow the

transmission of COVID-19 within the community. The decision to extend until the end of this coming half term will help us maintain the momentum we have built up.'

Deputy Matt Fallaize, President of the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture, said:

'Distance Learning does not seek to replicate a normal school day. However, all children have a right to education and Distance Learning has been designed to provide some structure and opportunities for purposeful learning. We of course recognise that most parents are not teachers and so we do not expect them to step into this role. In fact, the learning that schools will send has been specifically designed to help students work as independently as possible. It is really important to us that parents feel supported. We have produced a guidance document explaining how Distance Learning will work and this will be sent to all parents today. If any parent has concerns or questions not answered by that document, I would encourage them to speak to their child's school.'

Ends