



Media Release

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States-run schools to open to all students from 8th June

The Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture has decided that States-run schools will re-open to all students five days a week from Monday 8th June.

This aligns the position on schools to the decision announced today to move to Phase 4 from Saturday 30th May as part of the States' overall Exit Strategy.

Public health advice available last week allowed the Committee to announce a phased return of primary school students while continuing distance learning for secondary school students. The Committee met yesterday evening to review the latest public health advice and decided to move further and faster to allow all primary, secondary and special schools to open fully from Monday 8th June with appropriate measures in place to safeguard the health and wellbeing of students and staff.

Next week students and staff will be on half term holiday. The following week – commencing Monday 1st June – distance learning will continue while schools remain closed except to vulnerable students and children of essential workers.

The College of Further Education, which is part of The Guernsey Institute, will now open to students from Monday 1st June.

Director of Public Health, Dr Nicola Brink, advised the Committee that the positive position of the island's response to COVID-19 meant there was no longer any public health reason to prevent schools from opening to all students. Dr Brink has worked closely with colleagues in the Education Office to set out the public health measures that must be in place in schools to allow them to reopen fully. Preparations for these measures will be finalised in the first week after half term while schools remain closed to most students and while students continue with distance learning.

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

‘This is good news for our schools, parents and students. We always said we wanted to get all students back into school as soon as it was safe to do so and that our decisions would continue to be guided by the latest public health advice from Dr Brink and her colleagues. Yesterday Dr Brink wrote to me to confirm that the much improved public health position means there is no longer a reason to keep schools closed to most students. Therefore, we decided to accelerate students’ return to school. The earliest we can prepare schools to receive all students in a safe, organised way is Monday 8th June and so we decided to provide parents with as much notice as possible of that return date. There are measures to put in place in schools and at the College of FE to promote high standards of hygiene and we will be very diligent about this so that parents have confidence in allowing their children to get back to school.’

The latest public health advice provided to the Committee acknowledges the difficulty of maintaining strict social distancing in schools, especially with younger children. Social distancing will be maintained wherever possible as part of a package of measures which will protect students and staff. Other measures include regular hand washing, encouraging students to maintain high standards of personal hygiene, rigorously cleaning desks and surfaces, students not working in small groups and not sharing equipment and taking teaching outside where this is possible. Public Health has advised that this will make environment as safe as possible under the current circumstances.

A guidance document for parents and carers will be published next week and sent to them directly by their child’s school on Monday 1st June.

Deputy Fallaize said:

‘We know some parents and students will have concerns and feel anxious about returning to school. Parents are of course welcome to talk to their child’s school if they wish to be reassured about safety and welfare. For the rest of this school term we have asked schools and the Education Office to take a considerate and supportive approach to managing attendance where parents would prefer to keep their children out of school. We do not encourage parents to keep their children out of school, but we also want to respect parents’ wishes at this difficult time and we do not want parents to feel forced to send their children into school if they have strong views about keeping them at home at the present time.’

In the early years sector, nurseries and preschools will be able to welcome all their children back from 1st June as long as they have submitted plans to the States Early Years Team and received approval for them. Preschools and nurseries will continue to adhere to enhanced hygiene and cleaning procedures, maintaining the measures set out in previous phases to ensure the health and wellbeing of their children, families and staff. Nurseries and

preschools have been provided with guidance written in partnership by the States Early Years Team and Public Health. This recognises the particular characteristics of early years education and the teaching, learning and care required in this sector.

The latest public health advice also allows childminders to welcome all their families back and reopen if they have been closed – or to extend their offer to their other families if they have remained open only for children of essential workers or vulnerable children.

Any parents with questions can call the Education helpline number on 733017, or the main Education Office number on 733000.

Any early years provider with questions is asked to contact the States Early Years Team on 268313.

Ends