

## Media Release

**Date: 1 March 2021**

### **Schools, college and early years providers to re-open on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

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The majority of young people will be able to return to schools, college and early years settings on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, as long as the positive strides made since we entered lockdown are maintained.

Secondary school students will be split and return over two days, with Years 7, 8 and 9 returning on Monday while Year 10 and upwards will return on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March. This will allow younger students in secondary schools to familiarise themselves with the introduction of their new class bubbles, before older students return to school the following day.

All other students can return to educational settings on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

The decision was taken to re-open educational settings following discussions by the Civil Contingencies Authority, the Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture and Public Health Services.

It is hoped the re-opening of schools may be able align with the island moving to Stage 2 of the Exit from Lockdown Framework, however no decision has yet been made. The CCA will meet tomorrow to examine the latest Public Health evidence and consider the wider implication of moving to Stage 2, and an update will be provided at Wednesday's live briefing.

However, even if more time is needed before the island moves to Stage 2 – a move which would significantly reduce restrictions for islanders and businesses - the decision has been taken that it is now safe enough for schools to re-open from Monday. This is possible due to the substantial work carried out between Dr Brink and the Public Health team and senior educationalists to ensure specific measures are in place to support the return of education in a safe way.

These include:

- Classroom bubbles for primary schools and Years 7-9 in Secondary, with year-group bubbles for older students.
- The recommended use of face-coverings for older students and staff
- One-metre social distancing, wherever this is possible

- Staggered start and finish times
- Enhanced cleaning regime for education settings
- Limited school transport service to minimise contact between students
- A specific Public Health testing strategy for staff in education, as well of for some students.

Regarding the specific testing strategy for education, all staff including early year providers will be tested prior to education settings re-opening on a voluntary basis. Continued surveillance testing of the workforce will be carried out, along with a programme of ongoing screening for groups of students in older year groups once schools re-open.

Optional learning activities (as opposed to the Distance Learning offer) will be provided for children by their schools for Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March, as staff will be required to focus on using those two days to prepare for a return to classroom teaching next week.

Education settings will provide childcare and supervision for the children of essential workers (where both parents are classed as essential) and invited vulnerable students on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 5<sup>th</sup>, as has been the case throughout lockdown.

Further details have been published today to help parents and young people understand how education will 'look and feel' when students return. A frequently asked questions document has been published at [www.covid19.gov.gg/guidance/education](http://www.covid19.gov.gg/guidance/education). This document will be updated as needed.

Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen, President of the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture, said:

'This is very welcome news for many of us in the community. Schools have put on an excellent Distance Learning programme which has successfully catered for all of our 9,000 plus students and we thank our staff for their immense efforts during the lockdown to deliver this. Nevertheless, we recognise it has been very difficult for working parents to juggle the challenges of continuing to work from home whilst looking after and supporting their children with Distance Learning. We are also aware that that a prolonged period of isolation from their peers will negatively impact the wellbeing of children and young people and it is has been a priority to get them back into school as soon as it is safe to do so.

'With the support of the Director of Public Health, we have developed a detailed "enhanced measures" approach. The safety of children and staff remains paramount and we are confident that the suite of measures in place will enable sites to open to all students. As discussions with Public Health developed it became clear that phasing the return of students over a one week period, as had originally been planned, offered no advantage on safety grounds. This is why our students will be returning together on Monday and Tuesday next week.'

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health, said:

‘We have worked really closely with Education colleagues on this and, while nothing is ever entirely risk free, we believe that with the right mitigations in place we can safely re-open schools and other education providers to all students. The package of measures that we have developed with Education are really important to make this as safe as possible for staff and students, and also help us quickly contain the situation should any positive cases emerge once schools re-open.’

Deputy Peter Ferbrache, Chairman of the Civil Contingencies Authority, said:

‘This is a very positive step and is evidence of the huge strides we have made as a community since going into lockdown. The CCA is not yet in a position to confirm that the island as a whole will move into Stage 2 on Monday, as there are further discussions needed before we can make that decision. However, even if we have to wait a little longer before we can move into Stage 2, the significant work carried out by Dr Brink and her team and Education to put in place a range of education-specific measures has resulted in all of us having the confidence that schools can re-open irrespective of the further discussions needed about the timing of Stage 2. I am sure this will be welcome news to many parents and young people.’

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