

Media Release

For immediate release

Date: 16 July 2021

St Anne's School to close today following eight staff identified as close contacts of positive case in Alderney

Public Health Services became aware late last night of three positive cases of COVID-19 in Alderney. While contact tracing is ongoing, these appear at this stage to be instances of community seeding.

While none of the positive cases work for St Anne's School, initial contact tracing late last night identified eight members of staff as close contacts of one of the positive cases. As a precaution, given today is the last day of term, the decision has been taken to not open the school today while further contact tracing takes place. The school will be contacting parents this morning to inform them of the decision not to open.

While fully vaccinated contacts of a positive case would not ordinarily be required to self-isolate, Public Health guidance highlights that there may be some occupation-related reasons that would require them to do so. Given school students are unvaccinated, Public Health Services has taken the decision to require the St Anne's staff identified as close contacts to isolate for the time-being while surge testing and further contact tracing is carried out.

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health, said:

'We expected and are fully prepared for managing instances of community seeding as we begin to live responsibly with Covid, and they are not of themselves cause for significant concern. We will continue with our significant efforts around contact tracing to help contain them. I don't want the Bailiwick community to be concerned that any time we contact trace in an education setting, we will take the decision to close the school. That won't necessarily be the case and will depend on the individual circumstances. The decision taken this morning was that a cautious approach was appropriate in this case, especially as it is the last day of term and the school was due to be open for a half day only. We will focus today on contact tracing and testing and provide further information this afternoon.'

Martin Winward, Headteacher of St Anne's School, said:

'We are contacting parents this morning to let them know that the school won't be open today. I think this is a pragmatic and sensible decision given the circumstances and will hopefully reassure our local community as a result of the prompt action taken. While none of the three positive cases identified work in the school, eight members of our staff are now in self-isolation as close contacts of one of the positive cases, so it is sensible for us to close today – especially as it is a half day for the last day of term – so that Public Health can focus on further contact tracing and testing.'

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