

Media Release

Date: 14th January 2022

Education announces plans to relax Covid-19 measures in schools

Education has announced a planned relaxation of measures in schools, removing classroom bubbles and re-introducing extra-curricular activities among other changes, effective from Monday 17th January.

Following the CCA's announcement on Wednesday (12th January 2022) of its intention to relax testing requirements at the borders, as long as the recent positive trend around case numbers is maintained, Education, following dialogue with Public Health, has decided the time is right to relax measures in settings.

The easing of measures will enable students and staff to return to a more 'normal' educational experience which has been affected by working in bubbles. However, in moving to a better-quality learning environment an enhanced lateral flow testing regime will be put in place as an additional mitigation which all students, staff, parents and carers are asked to support.

From Monday, the management of the implications of COVID-19 in education settings will include:

- Secondary and post-16 students asked to take daily LFTs before attending
- Primary students asked to take an LFT on Monday, Wednesday and Friday before attending school
- Staff in all settings asked to take daily LFTs before attending
- As an additional mitigation following the removal of the package of enhanced measures, face coverings will now be expected in classrooms and teaching spaces in secondary and post-16 settings. They remain compulsory in communal areas for all staff and for secondary and post-16 students and for staff in communal areas within primary schools.

Measures in place since the start of term that are being **removed** include:

- Classroom bubbles
- School-run extra-curricular clubs and activities can resume
- On-island trips from one school to another (so to take part in swimming at another school, for example) can resume

Additionally, external organisations will again be able to use education settings facilities this weekend (Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th January), however sites will remain unavailable to

external organisations between Monday and Friday next week. Education facilities will then fully re-open to external use from Saturday 22nd January. Access to sites was restricted for external users primarily to ensure there was enough resilience in the facilities team to maintain sites being open during core school opening times, should staff have needed to isolate, however this can now begin to be relaxed.

Nick Hynes, Director of Education, said:

‘I would like to thank all those involved in the delivery of education – staff, students, parents and carers – for helping us with the package of measures we put in place for the new term. They were designed to get us through the first couple of weeks of term and the current signs are positive, which is why we’ve taken the decision to try and move back to what we hope and think will feel like a more normal educational experience. Removing the classroom bubbles is key to that, but as ever we need to ensure that appropriate measures are in place which is why we’re enhancing the current position around face coverings in class within a secondary or post-16 environment and asking everyone to support an enhanced lateral flow testing regime.

‘The start of term has been successful in terms of our core priority of minimising disruption to young people’s education, but we’re happy that the positive signs seen across the community with case numbers falling means these relaxations can come into effect on Monday.’

Separately, the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture yesterday agreed to delay the introduction of external inspections until after the February half term. The new inspection framework, carried out by Ofsted, was due to come into operation at the beginning of the Spring Term.

In taking the decision to delay the start of school and further education inspections until slightly later in the Spring Term, the Committee acknowledged that the current priority for staff in education settings is maintaining provision while managing challenges presented by the current wave of infections. It is important to note that the new inspection framework already includes a mechanism under which any settings that receive a notification of external inspection are able to request a delay to their inspection based on their individual circumstances at the time. This mechanism will be available for use if required after half-term.

The Committee has confirmed that, after the half-term break, save for any significant and unexpected change in circumstances across the islands, there will not be any further whole-system delay to external inspections in Guernsey and Alderney. From this point any deferrals of Ofsted inspection will be handled on an individual basis depending upon the specific circumstances of each setting at the time of their notification.