

Office of the Medical Officer of Health  
19-21 Broad Street | St Helier  
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Tuesday, 24 August 2021

## **New Covid safety guidance for educational settings**

Dear parents/carers and children/young people,

Ahead of you or your child starting or returning to school, college or nursery, in September, I am writing to you directly to explain the COVID-19 safe arrangements that will be put in place, and what will be changing for children and young people.

Following advice from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC), the Competent Authority Ministers (CAM) have agreed both the measures that need to be in place and the updates to guidance to allow for a safe return to education this autumn term.

### **Reasons for these measures**

At the end of the summer term, we saw an increase in infection rates in educational settings. This increase was a result of the Delta variant, which spreads more easily, especially with the close and prolonged proximity in educational settings.

Although children are at the lowest risk from COVID-19, concerning signals remain about the effect of the pandemic. For children and young people, being in school is important for their learning as well as their mental health and well-being.

Consequently, it is prudent that we maintain protective measures in schools, colleges and nurseries, which reflect the transmissibility of the Delta variant in these types of settings.

Therefore, the Competent Authority Ministers (CAM) has updated the measures for schools and educational settings, while also maintaining some existing measures. These will apply to schools, colleges, nurseries, after-school clubs and youth clubs.

All the measures will be reviewed during the autumn term and CAM may, as a result, issue updated guidance based on the ongoing prevalence of COVID-19 in the Island.

### **Updates to the Lateral Flow Testing programme**

The Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) programme will be extended to all secondary school students who will now take a test twice a week, rather than just once a week.

Lateral Flow Tests will be made available to all secondary students before the start of term. More details and guidance on the Lateral Flow Testing at home process will be announced next week.

All school, college, nursery, after-school staff and youth workers will be offered a PCR test before term begins and will be invited to take Lateral Flow Tests twice a week throughout term. As usual children and young people will be offered 'flu vaccination when this becomes available. School staff will also be encouraged to have the 'flu vaccine.

### **Updated guidance for direct contacts of a positive COVID-19 case**

The guidance for students and staff who are direct contacts of a positive case of COVID-19 is consistent with the guidance for direct contacts.

From 6 September, any student or staff member who is a direct contact of a positive case of COVID-19:

- must not attend nursery, school, college, after-school or youth club until they have a negative PCR test; and
- should take daily lateral flow tests for 10 days after their negative PCR result.

### **Updated guidance on class bubbles**

Class bubbles will no longer apply when children are outside the school building. This means that all year groups can mix outdoors at break time. Playgrounds and other open-air spaces provide good ventilation, which reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

In addition, mixed-year assemblies, of up to 15 minutes, can take place.

### **Measures that will remain in place**

Some of the measures that were in place last academic year will continue.

Secondary school students (and teaching staff in all settings) are still advised to wear masks when moving around communal areas.

Students, who are aged 11 and over, will still need to wear a mouth or nose covering on school buses.

All adults in school are still required to observe two (2) metre physical distancing wherever possible and maintain at least one (1) metre physical distancing. (physical distancing guidance varies between settings, which is outlined in full here: [Guidance for education and childcare: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-education-and-childcare-coronavirus-covid-19))

All spaces in these settings will continue to be well-ventilated.

Primary school students will still be required to maintain class 'bubbles' when inside the school building. The only exception is during assemblies, which should last no longer than 15 minutes.

I'd also like to take this chance to remind you that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has made the decision that all 16- and 17-year-olds as well children aged 12-15 who are vulnerable or live with an immunosuppressed individual, should be offered the COVID vaccine.

If your child is eligible and yet to have their vaccine, they should have it as soon as possible before they return to school. Vaccination provides the best protection there is against COVID-19.

Thank you and I wish you a safe and happy return in a couple of weeks

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan Muscat', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Dr Ivan Muscat MBE**  
**Deputy Medical Officer of Health**