

Tuesday, 4 January 2022

Update on Covid measures in education settings

The Children and Education Minister has thanked all education staff for working hard to prepare for students returning back to the classroom today for the new term.

Deputy Scott Wickenden has also expressed appreciation to students and their parents and carers for their understanding and confirmed that from today (4 January) school and college staff and secondary pupils will be required to wear face masks in classrooms.

Deputy Wickenden has released the following statement to outline the latest Covid measures and mitigations in education settings:

"I would like to thank all of our staff working across early years, schools and colleges who have worked hard over the festive period to make plans and prepare for students returning to classrooms today.

"I would also like to thank students and their parents and carers, for their understanding, particularly secondary school students for adhering to the mask requirements.

"In our schools and colleges, staff, secondary school students and visitors are required to wear masks in school buildings and corridors. As an added mitigation I have agreed that the requirement to wear face coverings will be extended to secondary school classrooms for pupils and staff and also for staff in primary school classrooms. The policy will be discussed further with STAC and CAM and kept under review, with any changes made when appropriate.

"We have introduced a comprehensive testing programme for pupils and staff which utilises Lateral Flow Test devices (LFT). These LFTs have enabled staff and pupils to regularly test for COVID, and their continued use is seen as a key defence in stopping the spread of the virus. All those in the school community have been asked to undertake a LFT prior to return today and we believe this is a proportionate response.

"In addition, all staff in the school and childcare sector have been offered a PCR prior to return as an added layer of protection of testing. These measures and the entirety of our approach is based on advice from our colleagues in Public Health.

"A number of CO2 monitors have already been purchased and been distributed and are being used in Jersey schools.

"Headteachers have been asked to update their risk assessments and workplace safety plans. There is considerable variation between school settings in terms of the expected impact of Covid at the start of term.

"We are fortunate to be able to tailor the control measures available to the situation in particular school settings, which means blanket decisions across all schools is not always necessary or appropriate.

"We knew it was going to be a difficult start for schools and colleges as Covid continues to impact our Island and I'm grateful to officers who have worked with school and college leaders to monitor and assess the situation.

"Today, due to the high-level of staff absence three secondary schools have asked some year groups to remain at home and continue their learning using online resources.

The year groups and classes who are learning remotely include:

- Les Quennevais Year 8 and Year 9, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
- Le Rocquier Year 8, Wednesday, Year 9 Thursday and possibly Year 10 on Friday
- Grainville - Year 7
- Samarés School Nursery

The schools have informed parents and students and will continue to keep them updated.

I do apologise for any inconvenience this will cause but the safety of our students and community is paramount in our decision making. We will continue to review the situation daily with health officials."