

Friday, 18 December 2020

Christmas holiday extended by two days for students

School and college students in Jersey will have their Christmas break extended to ensure that school leaders and their staff teams have adequate time to plan and prepare for the new school term.

Schools and colleges will remain closed to pupils on Monday 4 and Tuesday 5 January 2021, while teaching staff return to work to ensure that they are fully prepared to start the new term to the benefit of the safety, learning and well-being of all students and staff.

This means students will return to school on Wednesday, 6 January 2021.

The medical advice from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC), has been and remains consistent that schools should remain open to pupils. However, it has been agreed by the Minister for Education, having consulted with the Council of Ministers, that it is necessary for students to remain at home for these two days to ensure that teachers have sufficient time to make effective plans for the start of the Spring term and as part of our wider response to the management of Covid-19.

Education Minister Senator Tracey Vallois said: "The operational impact of Covid-19 on schools has been significant, both for staff and students.

"Although the medical advice is clear that schools should re-open as planned we are fully aware of the challenges that have been, and are continuing to be placed, on school staff.

"The two-day delay in the return of students in the New Year will enable schools to be properly prepared to commence the new term to the benefit of the safety, learning and well-being of the whole school community.

"We are, of course, closely monitoring the situation daily and if changes need to be made to these arrangements we will notify schools, parents and students at the earliest opportunity.

"I would like to thank all of our teachers and lecturers, their support staff, our school communities, and nursery and childcare staff for the imaginative ways they have tried

to make everything as normal as they possibly can for children and young people - filling these tough times with reassurance, care, learning and some festive fun.

"Many of our education establishments have had to manage recent positive Covid-19 cases at one of their busiest times of the year, impressively putting the children and young people in their care first, while also worrying about their own families and the Covid-19 pandemic.

"2020 has been a challenging year for all of us and a tragic one for some, and I would like to thank everyone, from the bottom of my heart, for helping to keep schools open and putting our children first.

"I would like to commend every one of you for rising to the challenges of Covid-19 and responding in such a dedicated and professional manner so that you could operate under the safest conditions possible.

"I am aware of the complex plans and processes schools have had to draw up and I fully appreciate the pressures this places on schools – yet, they have adapted and managed these demands with such skill and resilience.

"Our school community is made up of an amazing team who all pull together to ensure that schools, colleges and nurseries are safe every day. From headteachers, teachers, lecturers, childcare staff, school, nursery and college support staff and administrators to traffic wardens, cleaners, governors and officials in the CYPES department: all have played a vital role in enabling the Island's nurseries, schools and colleges to respond and adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"And, of course, not forgetting the parents, carers and families who have shown tremendous support and understanding for teachers, schools, colleges and nurseries throughout these unprecedented times.

"Finally, I would like to thank our children and young people – their resilience and co-operation has also played a huge role in helping to keep schools safely open. I know this Christmas will feel different for many of you – but I want to thank you all and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year."