

Office of the Medical Officer of Health  
19-21 Broad Street | St Helier  
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Friday, 17 December 2021

Dear parents/carers/students and the education community,

As we say goodbye to another unprecedented year, with Covid-19 in our community, we can't express enough our thanks for the commitment and passion that we are seeing and hearing about. Without it, this pandemic would be so much more challenging.

Jersey is the only place in the British Isles to have kept schools, colleges and nurseries open all year. Keeping schools open is a critical element of the Government strategy to put children first and to ensure that there is no further loss to students learning. This is due to the hard work and dedication from the Department, education community, parents, carers and students.

Over the last few weeks, the schools COVID-19 vaccination programme delivered 455 vaccination doses across 13 schools for students aged 12-18 years old. The programme has increased uptake by 10%, with overall vaccination uptake among 12 to 17-year-olds now around 40%.

The COVID-19 Omicron variant has been identified in Jersey, as a result of sequencing of PCR positive swabs. Therefore, it is extremely important that Islanders are taking extra precautions when going about their day to day lives over the festive period. It is likely that schools will be affected by COVID-19 cases when we return in the New Year, so we need to keep our guard up and continue to be prepared.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind the education community of the latest public health guidelines and reminders:

- Keep Testing - Taking Lateral Flow Tests and PCR Tests, where applicable
- Get vaccinated. All Islanders aged 18 and over should come forward for their booster dose with the utmost urgency.
- If you are aged 12 and over and you have not already had your first or second dose, it is not too late, you should book an appointment today and increase your immunity against the virus.
- Take a Lateral Flow Test before returning to nurseries, schools and colleges
- To keep up to date on the [Guidance for education and childcare: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(gov.je\)](#)

### **Covid-19 Symptoms**

It is essential that pupils who have Covid-19 symptoms do not attend school, nursery or other childcare settings and must self-isolate with all members of their household.

The three main symptoms of Covid-19 to be aware of are:

- New continuous cough
- Fever/high temperature
- Change or loss of smell and/or taste

If a young person or a child in your care develops any of the three main symptoms above they should self-isolate and you should call the coronavirus helpline on [0800 735 5566](tel:08007355566) as soon as possible to get advice and arrange a test. Further information on Covid-19 symptoms can be found [here](#) – the presence of these latter symptoms also merit isolation and testing.

### **Lateral Flow Testing (LFT)**

Testing has always been a critical part of our pandemic response and it remains vital going forward, which is why it is important that we keep testing.

Lateral Flow Testing (LFT), is designed to provide an additional layer of safety in schools by detecting asymptomatic cases to help keep schools open and children in continuous face-to-face learning. Remember that up to a third of individuals who test positive for Covid-19 have no symptoms at all and can therefore spread the virus unknowingly.

As school's will be closed over the Christmas period, parents will be able to order Lateral Flow tests by registering on the portal on [www.gov.je/covidsafe](http://www.gov.je/covidsafe).

If a child is identified as a Direct Contact, due to an interaction outside of school, then they will be booked for a PCR test and they can pick up Lateral Flow Tests from the Harbour, when they attend the PCR test.

### **Returning after off-island travel:**

Parents and staff who are travelling over the festive period are reminded to consult the [safer travel guidance](#).

Over the festive period we will be keeping the school, college and nursery situation under continuous review and will update schools, parents and students immediately if there are any changes.

We really do appreciate the huge efforts being made by parents, carers, students, school, college and nursery staff who continue to follow the public health guidelines, which helps to keep our community safe and wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely,



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



**Deputy Scott Wickenden**  
**Children and Education Minister**