

Media Release

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Date: 31st December 2021

Education introduces package of enhanced measures before start of new term

Education has announced a package of enhanced measures that will be in place when the new term begins next week.

These measures have been developed in consultation with Public Health and are designed to support the priority objective of keeping educational settings fully operational and therefore minimising any disruption to young people's education.

While there might be slight variations at each setting depending on their specific circumstances and operational needs, the suite of measures includes:

- All students and staff are asked to ensure they have negative LFTs on the day before they return to their setting and on the morning of each of the first three days of term.
- Schools may implement changes to drop-off and pick-up times to stagger the number of people on-site at any one time.
- Classroom bubbles will be re-introduced for primary schools (last in place earlier this year).
- Classroom bubbles will be introduced for KS3 (secondary school years 7-9).
- Face coverings are strongly recommended in classrooms for secondary and post-16 students, with additional outside breaks worked into the school schedule.
- No off-island trips will take place this term
- No on-island trips from one school to another
- No school-run extra-curricular clubs or activities for the time being

Schools will contact parents and carers to provide further information relevant to the implementation of these measures at their child's school.

Parents and carers are also asked to continue wearing face coverings when on school grounds, and we thank everyone for the excellent take-up of this last term.

Routine surveillance testing

Staff and all students from primary school age upwards are asked to continue taking LFTs twice a week (on Tuesdays and Thursday) before attending in the morning. Consideration had been given to increasing the frequency of this but it was felt twice a week would guard against testing fatigue while also helping to manage the island's stock of LFTs.

Attending education settings while in enhanced passive follow-up

Students who have been diagnosed as a positive case are able to return to school on day 7 following a negative LFT on day 6 and day 7 and as long as they are symptom-free; however they are only permitted to attend core educational provision until they are out of enhanced passive follow-up. This means that they should not attend any club, group or activity during this period of enhanced passive follow-up.

Staff are also able to attend if they are in enhanced passive follow-up provided a risk assessment has been undertaken and appropriate mitigations are in place, including the wearing of a face covering and ensuring teaching spaces are well ventilated.

Nick Hynes, Director of Education, said:

‘Towards the end of last term we tried to be upfront with the community and staff that things would look different in January. We need everyone involved in the delivery of education, which includes parents and carers as well as staff, to support us by adapting to what is likely to be a new norm – for the time-being at least - of managing disruption as a result of absences while maintaining our absolute focus of keeping settings open and delivering education.

‘This package of measures is designed to help us achieve that as much as possible. There will be disruption, it is unavoidable, but by introducing further measures specific to education we are trying to minimise that disruption, slow or halt the spread wherever we can so that our young people can maintain their studies. That is our priority while the island as a whole manages the implications of this Omicron wave.’

Ends

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