

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
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Thursday, 28 May 2020

Dear parents, carers and children

Re-opening schools, colleges and nurseries

Today I will be making an announcement about the details of a phased re-opening of all schools, colleges and nurseries, from 8 June.

This is based on the latest medical advice, which says that more children and young people can return safely to school.

The press conference will be live on the Government of Jersey Facebook page, at 2pm, but I wanted to write to you directly to ensure that you personally receive this latest information.

Ten weeks ago, I took the difficult decision of closing all Government-provided schools, colleges and nurseries to assist in our effort to contain the threat and spread of Covid-19 in our community.

As a parent, I know just how challenging and difficult these last ten weeks have been for everyone, particularly our children and young people who have missed their friends, teachers, nurseries, schools and colleges.

I would like to say how extremely proud I am of all of our parents and carers, school leaders, teachers, and support staff, trades unions, nurseries, nannies and childminders and the officers across my Department who have gone that extra mile to ensure that our children and young people have been, and continue to be, supported every step of the way.

The safety of children, staff and their families remain the absolute priority.

It has been a long ten weeks for everyone. And I believe that now is the right time to begin our carefully phased return, following the latest scientific and health advice, which is that it is in the best interests of children's wellbeing and education to return to their school, college or childcare setting under a careful and phased approach.

So, from the 8th June:

- Primary Schools will re-open to Years 6 full-time
- Secondary schools will re-open and provide some face-to-face teaching for years, 10 and 12 students.
- Highlands College will re-open and provide some face-to-face teaching for years 12 and 13 students
- Each school, college and early years setting will have a detailed plan for re-opening to ensure that arrangements are tailored, within the guidance.
- Private Nurseries will be able to welcome back a set number of children into bubbles
- And children will also be allowed to return to their childminder or nanny, in accordance with established guidance agreed with public health.

Each school, college and early years setting will have a detailed plan for re-opening to ensure that arrangements are tailored, within the guidance.

Covid-19 infection rates in the community will continue to be carefully monitored to see if the re-opening schools has any significant impact.

We will work with the Department to continue to assess the medical evidence and advice available to understand whether or not it will be appropriate and possible for additional pupils to attend primary school in another two weeks. The situation for other secondary age pupils will also be kept under continuous review.

And this will be led by Public Health advice and in consultation with the Children's Commissioner, school leaders and trades union colleagues.

We have been working hard to prepare the necessary guidance to support this decision and we will provide sufficient time for parents and carers, students, schools, colleges and nurseries to plan appropriately for reopening to more children and young people.

Again, I would like to thank you all for being so understanding and patient throughout this difficult period.

Guidance will be published by the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills on gov.je on how schools, colleges and the early years sector can open in a way which is safe for children, staff and parents.

Schools will keep you informed to ensure children and parents know what to expect when they arrive on their first day back.

This will enable parents, children and school staff to discuss any anxieties or practicalities before returning to school.

I would like to finish with a message to our children and young people to reassure them not to worry about returning to school, when the time eventually comes. Schools have been busy making changes to welcome back students to ensure you are supported. The medical professionals say that it is safe for children to start carefully returning to school.

We still face some challenging times ahead. In a situation like this it is normal for children to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or even angry. Of course, many will also feel excited but, whatever, the mix of emotions, know that you are not alone and that there is someone to talk to who you can trust: a parent or carer; or a teacher or support worker. There is someone who can help keep you and your school safe and healthy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Vallois', with a horizontal line underneath.

Senator Tracey Vallois
Education Minister