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All schools to return full-time in September

All Government-provided secondary schools will re-open full-time in September with no physical distancing between students and measures put in place to keep year groups separate, as much as possible, the Education Minister has announced today.

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) has recommended that, if the current COVID-19 situation in the Island remains stable, all children should return full-time to school, in September, following increasing evidence that both the incidence and the severity of COVID-19 in children is low. Recent data also indicates that children do not play a significant role in the spread of the virus.

All primary school students were able to return to school at the end of June, with more than 10,000 children back in their classrooms.

It had been more complex for all secondary school students to return by this date due to the 1 metre physical distancing guidelines.

However, due to the very low levels of the virus in the Island, this advice has been updated to remove all physical distancing between children in school and it allows all students to return full-time.

Physical distancing for staff will still remain in place, where possible, across all schools and settings, special schools and colleges.

Primary and secondary schools will provide parents with an update on their specific opening arrangements prior to the beginning of the start of the new term. Schools will still be working differently from September, under Public Health advice, including staggered starts, different break arrangements, 'bubble' arrangements for classes and year groups.

Senator Tracey Vallois said: "I understand how difficult this term has been for everyone, particularly for our secondary school students, and all of our school, college and nursery staff, students and their parents, and I would like to thank everyone for

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their patience and understanding. I am pleased that the physical distancing guidelines will be removed for children in schools and our secondary school students will be able to return full-time, like our primary schools, to as close to normal as possible in September under the guidelines.

“New research strongly indicates that children are unlikely to be a significant source of the spread of COVID-19. However, the impact of children being away from school both in terms of their education and the wider impacts on their physical and mental health is high. So, it is imperative that we do all we can to return all children back to school full-time while continuing to monitor the situation and prevalence of COVID-19 in the Island.”

“On the last day of the school summer term today, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our school staff, children, young people and their families a well-deserved summer holiday break.”

Parents are advised to follow the Safer Travel guidance regarding returning their children to holiday clubs, nursery and school settings when they return from their holidays.

Further information will be issued towards the end of the summer holidays to confirm the current COVID-19 situation at that time.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. For further information, please contact the press office on 01534 440430 or pressoffice@gov.je