

Date: 14 December 2021

Our Ref: 211214/Edge J/PR/FC

Hon Julie Edge MHK  
Minister for Education, Sport and Culture  
Isle of Man Government  
Onchan Constituency MHK  
Legislative Buildings  
Finch Road  
Douglas  
Isle of Man  
IM1 3PW

Email: [julie.edge@gov.im](mailto:julie.edge@gov.im)

Dear Julie,

### **January 2022 Reopening**

The NASUWT notes with the utmost concern the statement by the UK Prime Minister on 12 December that "no one should be in any doubt, there is a tidal wave of Omicron coming", and although Omicron has not yet been detected in the Isle of Man, it is highly likely to be only a matter of time before the wave washes up on Manx shores.

In light of the evidence emerging daily regarding the impact of the Omicron variant, the latest modelling which suggests that case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths will continue to increase throughout January, and the raising of the Covid threat level to Level 4 in the United Kingdom, I must urge you now to consider the immediate introduction of additional education measures to help slow the spread of Covid-19 and to minimise further disruption to education.

In addition to wider community-level measures, we believe that additional measures will be required within schools and University College Mann (UCM) now and as they return after the Christmas break.

I wrote to you previously on 1 December to request the strengthening of control measures within schools and UCM. Since I wrote to you on this matter, the forecast scientific trajectory for the Omicron variant has worsened significantly and with it, the potential impact on the Isle of Man. Available evidence strongly points to the need for additional control measures need to be in place now and through the start of next term.

The NASUWT urges the Isle of Man Government to act immediately and to not delay critical decisions until the commencement of the school and UCM holiday period. An immediate announcement from the Government on additional measures for schools and UCM is, we believe, essential before the schools and UCM close for the Christmas break.

Such additional measures we would ask you to consider would include:

- Staggering the return of pupils to all schools and UCM at the start of January 2022;
- Providing onsite testing facilities and resources for pupils throughout the period between January and the February half-term 2022;
- Committing to investment in additional mitigations such as improved ventilation systems and CO<sub>2</sub> monitors in every classroom.
- Publishing further guidance advising schools and UCM to update risk assessments in light of Omicron, in consultation with staff and trade unions, ready for wider reopening in January;
- Publishing further guidance advising schools and UCM to cancel or postpone non-essential activities or events, to move to online staff and parental meetings, and to mandate staff working from home where appropriate, during this period.

The NASUWT believes that these measures, together with wider Government measures including on vaccinations, are proportionate and responsible, and will contribute to our shared aim of minimising further disruption to children's education.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**