

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary
NASUWT

Sent by email only to: frances.cater@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

16 December 2021

Dear Patrick,

January 2022 Reopening

Thank you for your letter dated 14 December regarding the January 2022 reopening of schools.

I would like to reassure you I am receiving regular updates on the spread of the Omicron variant in the UK and that Ministers, medical and public health officials and education officers are fully focussed in ensuring schools will open safely to pupils and staff in January.

In addressing the additional measures, which you outline in your letter, I will make the following observations:

Staggering the return of pupils to all schools and colleges at the start of January 2022

At this stage, we are not planning on staggering the return of pupils to schools and colleges at the start of January. Throughout the pandemic we have done well in keeping schools open and providing children with continuous face-to-face learning. This remains our intention for the new term. We are keeping all measures under review over the Christmas period, especially in light of the Omicron variant, and we will work with head teachers to determine what additional measures might be required where the evidence supports doing so.

Providing onsite testing facilities and resources for pupils throughout the period between January and the February half-term 2022

All secondary pupils and staff members across all schools are eligible for the school testing programme. They are requested to take twice weekly at-home Lateral Flow Device testing and before attending events such as rehearsals and performances. A separate testing programme is in place for direct contacts of positive COVID-19 cases at a school or college, where pupils are required to take a lateral flow test each day for 10 days. Where a direct contact tests positive or has symptoms, they are required to take a PCR test. In addition to this, arrangements are being made for staff in schools to be able to undertake a PCR test before returning to school for the spring term.

We believe these testing arrangements are a proportionate and effective response to the risk of COVID-19 transmission in education settings, which protect pupils and staff members whilst minimising disruption to education. We are keeping these testing arrangements under review, and we will continue to engage with schools, parents and pupils to highlight the importance of regular testing.

Publishing further guidance advising schools and colleges to update risk assessments in light of Omicron, in consultation with staff and trade unions, ready for wider reopening in January

Schools' COVID-19 guidance is continually being reviewed and head teachers are being advised to update their safety plans and risk assessments. The Department's COVID response team will work with schools to review these plans and the mitigation in place; our union colleagues will be included with this process. Where concerns are raised with union representatives these will be escalated to the Head of Governance and Resources, who will be the principle point of contact and will ensure immediate remedial action is taken.

Publishing further guidance advising schools and colleges 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.

We have in place a range of measures in schools and colleges to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These measures are available for head teachers to implement with the support of CYPES and Public Health. We are keeping measures under review in light of the Omicron variant and will provide further guidance to schools and colleges where necessary. We already advise schools to conduct parental meetings online wherever possible and will continue to reflect wider government guidance on working from home where reasonably possible and mask wearing in indoor settings.

It is important to confirm at this point the differences to how COVID-19 is managed in schools in Jersey than in the UK. We are fortunate here to have such close day-to-day working relationships with schools and other Government of Jersey officials. This enables data on the impact of COVID across the education system to be analysed and assessed and individual school responses to be developed. Support can then be provided immediately to that school. Where we see cases rising, we can act swiftly to mitigate the spread of the virus, whether by tightening the already established measures in schools (for example mask wearing or guidance for visitors) or if necessary to introduce stronger measures such as enabling online learning from home.

All these changes are supported by regular union engagement, which has been ongoing throughout the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,



Deputy Scott Wickenden
Minister for Children and Education

D +44 (0)1534 440152
E S.Wickenden@gov.je