



## Novel Coronavirus – COVID-19 Guidance for Parents & Carers

This guidance will advise and guide parents and carers on:

- the reasoning for the 'pause and assess' direction
- what current advice means for you and your child
- advice on suitable alternative childcare arrangements
- things to do
- things to avoid
- things not to do

Detailed information and guidance about the virus can be found at:

[www.gov.gg/coronavirus](http://www.gov.gg/coronavirus)

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### 1. Why have we closed schools?

The decision was taken to close all schools, colleges and early years providers until Guernsey is able to provide on-island testing of samples from suspected coronavirus infections. Currently, samples are sent to the UK for analysis, but due to pressures which the UK is facing, we have recently experienced delays in the turnaround times for test results.

Once we are able to carry out on-island testing, we will be able to quickly determine the extent to which 'community seeding' is taking place. In other words, how much coronavirus spreads from one person in the Bailiwick to another, as opposed to cases coming into the island from other jurisdictions. We will then be able to review the decision.

A key focus in the Bailiwick is to introduce on-island testing, for which work is progressing at pace. However with many tests now waiting for results we can no longer be certain that we are in the containment phase.

As such the decision has been made to **pause** the current education provision within the Islands. This includes both private and public schools, colleges, pre-schools, nurseries and childminders. This does however exclude children of critical workers.

Further information regarding critical workers and the arrangements for their children can be found at [www.gov.gg/coronavirus](http://www.gov.gg/coronavirus).

## **2. What this means for your child in the immediate future**

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 was their last day of school UNLESS the parent(s) or carer(s) of a child are deemed to be critical workers. From this date your child/ren will not be able to attend school. As such you must make sure that there are suitable alternative arrangements in place.

## **3. What constitutes 'suitable' alternative arrangements**

The NSPCC advises that children under the age of 12 should not be left at home alone. Therefore, if your child is under this age, or you as their parent / carer feel they are not ready to be left alone you should make alternative arrangements.

This means, where possible:

- If you are able to work from home you must make every effort to provide adequate care and supervision while doing so
- You consider the risk if those in more vulnerable groups (aged 65+) or with underlying health conditions usually help. Children can carry a number of virus whilst displaying mild or no symptoms – try someone else. This means you should avoid using grandparents or other older relatives to assist with childcare
- Ensure that at all times you are aware of where, what and with whom (peers or otherwise) your children interact

## **4. Things to do**

Clear communication is always helpful and discussions with children about COVID-19 do not need to be completely avoided. Explaining the situation in a way they understand can make a difference, for example by reinforcing the importance of hand washing.

This advice does not stop small gatherings amongst those you normally socialise with. However such meetings should be small, for short periods of time and ideally outside or in well ventilated spaces in accordance to the advice given regarding social distancing which can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/guidance/covid-19-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/covid-19-guidance).

Trying to keep children physically active through outdoor play or to other open spaces where it is possible to maintain social distancing may well have a positive impact on children's wellbeing throughout this challenging time.

Just as important as physical health is mental and social health, therefore where possible the use of technology and social media, within appropriate adult oversight, is a great way to maintain social bonds with peers as well as family where it is no longer appropriate to visit.

## **5. Things to avoid**

There are, unfortunately, examples of things that while being deemed 'normal' do pose some risk and are not in line with current social distancing guidance. This means that where possible some activities should be avoided while your child is not at school.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Extracurricular clubs that are not able to comply with social distancing.
- Avoid indoor play areas e.g. soft play and indoor climbing frames.
- Family and social events that bring you in contact with greater numbers of people than you would otherwise normally see.

## **6. Things not to do**

There are some things that you should not do. These include:

- Arranging large numbers of children to participate in shared activities or group childcare
- Childcare provision by those most vulnerable (65+) as well as those with underlying health conditions
- Your child should avoid participation in activities where transmission may be more easily spread due to shared surfaces such as play areas
- Group playdates, sleepovers, birthday parties, movie nights and large gatherings

### **Important health advice:**

Illness from coronavirus infection is less common and usually less severe in children and young adults. However, they can get infected and be carriers for the infection.

So even if your child appears to be healthy, it is essential that they practice social distancing from vulnerable groups such as older people (65+ years of age), and people with chronic diseases and underlying health-conditions.

Generally minimising physical contact with each other will help avoid spreading the virus, so children and young people should avoid meeting up in “groups”.

Other health-related guidance:

- advise social distancing, hand-washing, surface hygiene, sneezes and coughs being caught and avoiding touching your face should be practiced at all times
- ensure that your home is well ventilated and clean. There should be strict cleaning and disinfection routines for table-tops, doorknobs, bathroom, toilets, phones, keyboards and tablets
- children who are sick should be kept isolated, with appropriate care, and should not meet anybody outside of the household

### **Useful links**

<https://www.gov.gg/coronavirus>

[www.gov.gg/covid19guidance](http://www.gov.gg/covid19guidance)

[www.gov.gg/covid19faqs](http://www.gov.gg/covid19faqs)