

# Return to school guidance for Parents and Carers



**As part of the exciting news that we are moving into Phase 4 of the island's Exit Strategy from lockdown, and in line with updated public health advice, we are delighted that all students will be returning to States-run primary, secondary and special schools on Monday 8th June (the College of Further Education will welcome many students back on Monday 1st June).**

While this is fantastic news for our school communities, we also recognise that parents and carers may have questions or concerns. We have tried to address some of those key issues in this guidance, but if you think we've missed anything please contact your child's school as they will be happy to help.



### **Is it safe for students to be in school?**

We are very lucky in Guernsey to be supported by an excellent team in Public Health, and the advice they gave the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture is that there is currently no public health reason to stop all students returning to school. The Director of Public Health has offered advice about measures schools can put in place to ensure students and staff are as safe as possible.

This does mean that the school day is likely to look a little different. For example, there will be no assemblies or gatherings, no after school clubs or events will take place, there will be an even greater focus on getting students to regularly wash their hands, excellent respiratory hygiene (Catch it, Bin it, Kill it), and ensuring students don't share equipment. The enhanced cleaning and disinfection regime specified by Public Health, which has been in place since March, will continue. It is also really important that your children **do not** attend school if they are unwell. Doing these things will allow students to enjoy the many benefits of being in school.



## What changes will there be to the school day?

All schools will receive detailed guidance about the steps they need to take when reopening to all students, but it is important to recognise that our schools are diverse in both size and design so there may be differences in how each needs to operate. Schools will contact parents and carers directly to inform you of any specific measures you need to be aware of that are relevant to your child's school.

For example, some schools might use staggered start and finish times in order to reduce congestion and help efforts to maintain social distancing. We know that staggered start and finish times might require parents/ carers to adapt their morning or afternoon work routines a little but we're hopeful that employers will be understanding, given the circumstances and the need for us to maintain the #GuernseyTogether ethos that has been so successful in our collective efforts to respond to the pandemic.

Once in school, there will also be changes to break times, including lunch, to minimise the number of children and young people moving around the school at the same time. Certain activities will not take place as normal such as singing, woodwind or brass music lessons (although these can continue via remote learning within the learner's home), and we will limit practical sessions in subjects such as science so that pupils do not have to work so closely together.

But please be assured that your child's school will contact you this week to outline any specific measures being put in place at that school.



## What additional cleaning and hygiene measures will be in place?

We will operate a system of enhanced and regular cleaning throughout schools. This will include being particularly vigilant in the cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, toilets and equipment. School staff are also going to work really hard to continue promoting excellent hygiene practices, with a heavy focus on hand washing (throughout the day, before and after eating, using equipment or accessing lockers).



## **Will children, young people or teachers need to wear PPE (personal protection equipment) including face coverings and face masks?**

Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended or advised by Public Health Guernsey. It is very important that schools and parents/carers remain vigilant and that anyone with symptoms (or who develops any symptoms of Covid-19) will be required to stay at home.

Public Health guidance is that staff in education settings do not require PPE beyond that which they would normally need for their work. This is the case even if, in certain circumstances, it may be difficult to maintain social distance between them and the children that they support.



## **What about social distancing?**

Public Health have given clear advice on this in the context of education settings, as it is recognised that maintaining social distancing at all times in a school context is very difficult. In schools, it is important to consider social distancing as part of a wider package of measures – like hand washing, respiratory hygiene, enhanced cleaning, and no sharing of equipment.

However, schools have been considering how they can organise classrooms, lessons and students to minimise interaction wherever possible. This includes arrangements so that children, young people and staff are separated enough to ensure they are not breathing on or touching each other. Public Health have advised that there does not need to be a specific measurement but, where practicable, one metre is being used as a guide.

Once all learners have returned, wherever possible classes will remain together throughout the day and unnecessary movement between classrooms will be limited. Where this is not possible, for example for some specialist subjects and especially in secondary schools, teachers will design lessons that minimise the mixing of pupils and will avoid the need to share equipment. Schools will also manage break and lunchtimes so that groups of students do not mix unnecessarily.



## Will school transport be available?

School buses will run from 8th June on usual routes but capacity will be significantly limited due to the need to maintain social distancing on public transport. For that reason and unless it is absolutely essential for your child to catch the bus, please do everything possible to support them to travel to-and-from school via other methods, such as walking or cycling. The last thing we want is students stranded at a bus stop because there is not enough room for them to travel, so the use of public transport should be avoided if at all possible.

For any child who cannot walk, cycle or be dropped off at or near their school, parents are asked to complete the following form to help us to understand the likely number of students who do need to use the bus service. This must be submitted by midday on Wednesday 3rd June and you will receive a response on Friday 5th June. Please note that if the service is over-subscribed, priority will be given to those students who live furthest from their school. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Education helpline number on 733017 to highlight the need for this service.

<https://forms.gle/A3qCzozkaFdNoXTE7>

If you choose to drive your child to/from school, please be aware that the usual parking arrangements may not be in place for drop off or pick up. For example there may be drop-off lanes with staff on hand to escort students into school or areas identified as drop-off zones. Your child's school will contact you this week to explain what arrangements will be in place.



## What does my child need to take with them to school?

A water bottle will be particularly important. Students are also encouraged to bring their own items such as pencils and pens alongside their usual school equipment. Children do not need to bring hand sanitiser to school with them, as there will be regular times built into the school day for them to wash their hands and this is more effective. However, parents can send their children with hand sanitiser if they wish, although this is advised for secondary students only.



### **Will students need to wear their school uniform?**

Your school will contact you directly to let you know about their arrangements for wearing uniform. Although usual uniform may continue to be worn, some schools may choose to create greater flexibility. This may particularly be the case wherever learning will be taking place outside the classroom.



### **Will there be PE lessons?**

Yes, activity is encouraged so PE lessons will include moderate exercise focused on general health and wellbeing. However, no direct contact sports will take place and for the time being there will be no school sports competitions.



### **Will there be any trips or visits this term?**

While learning may take place outside of the classroom and on the school premises, off-site activities are likely to be limited and will be subject to public health guidance.



### **What about after-school clubs?**

There are currently no plans for after-school clubs to restart, however this will be kept under review to ensure alignment with Public Health guidance.



## **I am concerned about my child's health, what should I do?**

Any student who is unwell with any flu-like symptoms (headache, muscle aches, blocked nose, fever, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell) must not attend school or college. This is one of the most important elements of reducing risk in schools. They must wait a minimum of 48 hours after all symptoms have cleared before returning to school.

If your child becomes ill during the day they will be isolated and will need to be collected immediately by a parent or carer. Please make sure your child's school/college have your up to date contact information.

Please let your child's class or form teacher know if they suffer from hay-fever and what the usual symptoms are.



## **How will children with special educational needs and/or disabilities be supported?**

Schools that support children with special educational needs and/ disabilities will largely continue to operate as they have throughout the response to COVID-19, when they have remained open for students who needed to attend. This will include school transport.

Children and young people who access specialist education provision may require more hands-on care due to their specific needs which means that there will be slightly different approaches to risk management than in other schools. Special schools will continue to risk assess carefully across the school and will follow the Public Health guidance that is specific for their sector. Any parents with concerns should contact their child's school to discuss the plans that will be in place to keep them safe.



## **What about lunchtime? Will the canteen be open?**

School canteens may not be open during Phase 4 (this includes vending machines) so all students will need to bring a packed lunch to school. Learners will either eat their lunch in their assigned classroom or will be able to eat outside when weather conditions and seating permits. Schools may use staggered times for lessons and break times to help with limiting the contact between groups of children and young people.



## **Does my child have to attend school full time from the 8th June?**

We know some parents and students will have concerns and feel anxious about returning to school as a result of COVID-19. If you have any concerns, please contact your child's school so they can discuss these with you and offer reassurance about safety and welfare. For the rest of this school term we will take a considerate and supportive approach to managing attendance where parents would prefer to keep their children out of school. Schools will be following public health guidance carefully so that they can keep all children as safe as possible and therefore we do not encourage parents to keep their children out of school. However, we do respect parents' wishes at this difficult time and we do not want parents to feel forced to send their children into school if they have strong views about keeping them at home at the present time. Any parents who do choose to keep their children at home are asked to inform their schools of the child's absence using the usual processes.

Please note that if students do not attend and parents have not made contact with the school, someone will make contact to talk about any concerns or difficulties that may be preventing attendance. Distance Learning materials will not be available for pupils who do not attend school, as teachers will now be working with classes full-time.





## What about Years 11 and 13?

As a result of GCSE and A'Level exams being cancelled due to the pandemic, students currently in Years 11 and 13 will not be sitting exams in the same way as in previous years. This means that they are not required to attend school this term. However, these students will be contacted at least once a week by tutors and other staff as appropriate and we would encourage those who are planning to join the Sixth Form Centre or the College of Further Education later this year to engage with the useful bridging materials that have been provided by the Sixth Form Centre and the College of FE. Any students in Year 11 who are not transitioning to the College of FE or Sixth Form in September 2020 will be free to take up full-time work from 1st July 2020.



## My child or a member of my family has been told to continue to 'shield' for health reasons?

If your child or a member of your family has been told by your GP to continue to shield for health reasons during Phase 4, please contact your child's school to let them know. Your school will make arrangements for appropriate work-packages to be provided, just as they would for any pupil who is absent from school for a significant health reason.



## Arrangements for September 2020

Further information will be provided on the arrangements for the start of the new academic year in September, including the new Reception intake and the transition of students between schools.